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JUN. 12th 2006

He's a renowned Canadian scholar who denounced fanaticism. Now he's locked up in the same Iranian prison where Zahra Kazemi was beaten to death. Can't anyone help?

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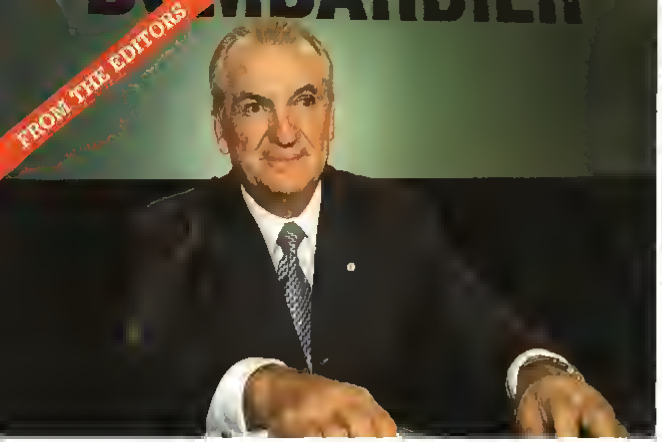
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Question of the week *Is Ricky Williams a welcome addition or an embarrassment to the CFL? Vote in our online poll. www.macleans.ca*
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BOMBARDIER CEO Laurent Beaudoin wants even more government assistance

Bombardier's always-outstretched hands

Bombardier has never been shy about dipping into the public purse to support its corporate endeavours. The Quebec-based maker of planes and trains has always insisted that what's good for its bottom line is good for Canada. But last week's call by CEO Laurent Beaudoin for the Bank of Canada to rein in the rise in the dollar sets a new standard for hubris.

While reporting yet another round of dismal quarterly results at Bombardier's annual meeting in Montreal, Beaudoin blamed the rising loonie for squeezing profit margins in manufacturing. Rather than outline a plan of action, Beaudoin instead unloaded on the central bank. "I have a hard time understanding why [the bank] only steps in when there is a loss of confidence in the Canadian dollar, and not when there is excess confidence that leads to overly rapid appreciation of our currency," he complained.

Since Beaudoin has a hard time wrapping his head around the situation, allow us to clarify. The 40 per cent rise in the Canadian dollar since the beginning of 2003 is not the result of "excess confidence" but a totally reasonable and positive reflection of the strength of the domestic economy. Exports remain well ahead of imports, jobs continue to be created at a brisk pace, and unemployment is near its lowest point in a generation. Prices for Canada's energy, metals, and other primary exports are near record highs, and that is attracting massive foreign investment to the country.

The Bank of Canada has quite rightly raised interest rates to keep inflation at bay, thus preventing bubbles in the stock market and in housing prices. That discipline has delivered a much higher standard of living for Canadians by keeping a lid on import prices, boosting productivity, and making it easier for companies to buy technology from the U.S. It's true that some manufacturers have struggled, but as Bank of Canada governor David Dodge said last week, most workers and companies are proving extremely flexible and resourceful. "This is an economy that has matured enormously in the past 20 years," Dodge said, and Canadians are substantially better off for it.

Calls for misguided fiscal policy are not uncommon in Canada, but it is especially galling to see such calls coming from Bombardier, a company that has availed itself of unprecedented levels of government largesse over the course of several decades. By some estimates, Canadian taxpayers have pumped more than $700 million directly into the company, and still it has slashed jobs and delivered ever-diminishing returns to shareholders. It's time Beaudoin and other manufacturing leaders admitted the 1970s are over, and put their outstretched hands back in their pockets. It's not up to the Bank of Canada or the Canadian taxpayer to provide answers to their business problems. The universe does not revolve around Bombardier headquarters. M

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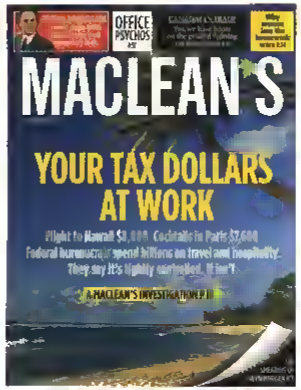
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MAIL BAG

'The Ottawa spending story sent my blood pressure through the roof'

HEY, BIG SPENDERS

I AM OUTRAGED BUT NOT surprised to read about government fat cats jetting around the world to useless conferences, travelling first class, and eating in gourmet restaurants ("Your tax dollars at work," Cover, May 29). I am a teacher, and I consider my work every bit as important as any public servant in Ottawa. Yet when I travel to any (very infrequent) meetings or training sessions, I am limited to $99 a night for a hotel room, and I am asked to share a car whenever possible so that mileage is paid to only one person. No matter what I eat during the day, I can only claim about $35 for all three meals! Where are the limits, guidelines and penny-pinching auditors in Ottawa? What a disgrace.
Laura Vautour, Bathurst, N.B.



THIS STORY was enraging. My blood pressure went through the roof and I had spells of blurred vision. The next time you run something like this, please put a health warning on it. God knows we can't strain the health care system anymore.
Magda Leonowicz, Toronto

LATELY, THE BUZZ WORD for our government's overspending is accountability. But who really cares about accountability? And are officials only liable after the fact? I'm wondering if it is too much to ask that a proactive approach be taken? Or is budgeting beyond the grasp of the government? It's hard to spend money you just don't have. Charlie Gillis and Michael Friscolanti's article regarding the government's disclosure of data has hit the issue right on the head: providing masses of data isn't necessarily providing information or accountability. Canadians now have the illusion that spending is being curbed and scrutinized. A lot of good that does!
Shannon Watson, London, Ont.

TO SUGGEST that John Watson's legitimate, documented, and publicly reported travel expenses from his home on the West Coast to Ottawa and back during his term in the Privy Council Office are in any way akin to the reported acts of George Radwanski is, in my mind, libellous. You have not only harmed Watson, and indeed, painted an untrue and defamatory portrait of public servants in general, you have also done a great disservice to your readers by suggesting that they should view honest work as criminal activity, and public servants, in general, as scoundrels or thieves. The Treasury Board guidelines on travel for public servants at all levels, and for political staff, have been strengthened over the years by several governments (meaning they have reduced the benefits available to public servants who must travel for their work). If the point of your article was that these basic perks should be reduced further, then your criticism should be of the guidelines, not those to whom they apply. Having to travel constantly, live out of suitcases, eat overpriced and non-nutritious food while sleeping in hotel rooms devoid of fresh air, are not perks. Despite implying that civil servants should not travel—or travel so much—you make almost no mention of what these people have accomplished for the government and for Canada.
Patrick O'Reilly, Ottawa

I HAVE A SOLUTION to this overspending. Before government employees go on spending sprees, they should be told that if a cheaper dinner or fare could be found, then they will only be reimbursed for the lesser expense. Perhaps if money was actually coming out of their own pockets, the abuse would stop.
Lori Walker, Winnipeg

DA VINCI, AD INFINITUM

I'M GETTING thoroughly fed up with articles telling me how silly I am to believe everything in Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci*







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'Taking thin advice from someone who advocates an unhealthy lifestyle and gimmicky weight loss is exactly why our self-esteem nosedives'

Code (Books, May 15) The majority of readers know it's fiction, believe me. We're not getting the book from the non-fiction sections of the bookstores or the libraries. Whatever inconsistencies exist in it are probably only memorized by fanatics who like to jump on whatever popular bandwagon is travelling our pop culture byways. Let's keep some perspective, shall we? Oh, and here's a conspiracy theory for you: the



ARE SOME house chores really necessary?

Church and Opus Dei have a secret agreement with Dan Brown and Hollywood and are getting a cut of the royalties. That's the only explanation for behaviour that has prolonged the furor over the novel.
Allison Stewart, Stony Plain, Alta

BATTLES AT HOME

WOMEN, especially picky women, can be the authors of their own misfortune ("I declare a chore war," Home, May 29). Missing from the research in your story on the responsibility of domestic chores in the modern family is the notion of necessity. Researchers should go back and do interviews with bachelors to establish a baseline of bare necessity. In other words, is it really necessary to wash a coffee cup every time you use it?
Gerald Becker, Thunder Bay, Ont.

THE BOTOX WAY

A ONCE-HONOURABLE profession is prostituting itself on the altar of the almighty dollar ("Has your doc left you for Botox?" Health, May 22). I do not wish to join the Botox bandwagon. I did not do a 10-year stint training in dermatology to become a glorified aesthetician. There is no question in my mind whether it is more important to freeze facial muscles or remove a potentially life-threatening skin cancer. At a time in Canada when we are dangerously short of dermatologists, the Botox defection is only worsening an already critically understaffed situation.
Dr. Sheila Lousy, Burlington, Ont.

THE TATTLETALE TATTOO

IN A COUNTRY where taxpayers paid for Karla Homolka to get a university education while she was in jail, I would be thrilled to underwrite the removal of the huge swastika tattoo from Darren LeTourneau's chest ("The marked man," Justice, May 22). The whole point of rehabilitation in prison is to prepare the incarcerated for a useful and productive existence back in the mainstream, and what could be better than to support a former rabid racist in his efforts to start a new life?
Sarah Harrison, Horning's Mills, Ont.

HIDING HEFTINESS

WHILE IT SOUNDS like author and former style columnist Danica Lo has good ideas about dressing slimmer (although they're nothing any smart woman doesn't know), the fact that she admits to refusing to exercise and says she lost inches in a spa treatment only to binge on pizza, is the sad evidence of her lack of credibility ("How to look 15 pounds thinner," Help, May 22). Taking look-thin advice from someone advocating an unhealthy lifestyle and gimmicky weight-loss tricks is exactly why our self-esteem nosedives. Instead of spending a year writing a book about how to look 15 lb. thinner, she could have got off her butt, exercised and cut the pizza to actually be 15 lb. thinner. No doubt this woman is American. Canadian women are smarter than this.
C.J. Thiessen, St. John's

WILD THINGS

WHAT IS IT about this magazine? The non-stop reporting that everything in nature is evil is irresponsible ("Deadly encounters," Nature, May 29). Let's hear the truth—wildlife is being purposely wiped out for nothing but greed. That greed and the uncaring attitudes of this country put us in line with the worst countries of the civilized world. You shame those of us who care about something other than ourselves.
Bill LaSalle, Brantford, Ont.

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Hey kids, who can spare $5,400 for Uncle Joe?



PAUL WELLS

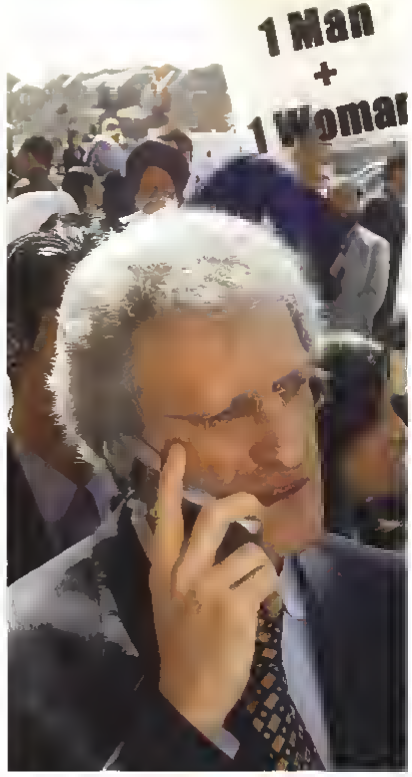
"Fairly or not," James Travers wrote in the *Toronto Star* last week, "[Joe] Volpe is synonymous with the old [Liberal] Party."

Hmm. That's a toughie. I'm going to have to go with "unfairly."

Not because it would be wrong to tie Volpe to the past, but because it is too gentle on the Liberal party to let it off the hook in the present.

Volpe, you'll recall, is the perfect storm of incuriosity and cynicism who celebrated his entry into the Liberal leadership race by cheerfully accepting donations from entire families. Families with connections, just by coincidence, to the Apotex pharmaceuticals firm. Each donation reaching precisely the $5,400 maximum permitted by the Elections Act. Mamas, papas, children—including, in one case, twin 11 year-olds—gauged the affection in their hearts for Volpe's political mission and found that it exactly matched the limus allowable under law. Assuming, of course, the broadest possible reading of the law.

The revelations certainly have an old-school ring to them. But it's impossible to regard Volpe's actions as uncharacteristic of *today's* Liberal party unless someone in that party is willing to reject them. Last week in Ottawa, no such creature could be found. In Ottawa, Liberals scrambled to make excuses for Volpe, the most common being that it did not matter that his behaviour was absurd because it was probably not illegal. Party officials noted happily that he had given $27,000 of the money back to the kids and pronounced the whole affair a victory for transparency in campaign reporting. MPs supporting other leadership candidates—who may need Volpe's support before this race is over and therefore can't, apparently, set their own ethical bar too high—pronounced it a matter "between Mr. Volpe and the party."



FRANK GUNN/CP

Grits have always gone to the 44th floor for money, but Volpe hit the company daycare

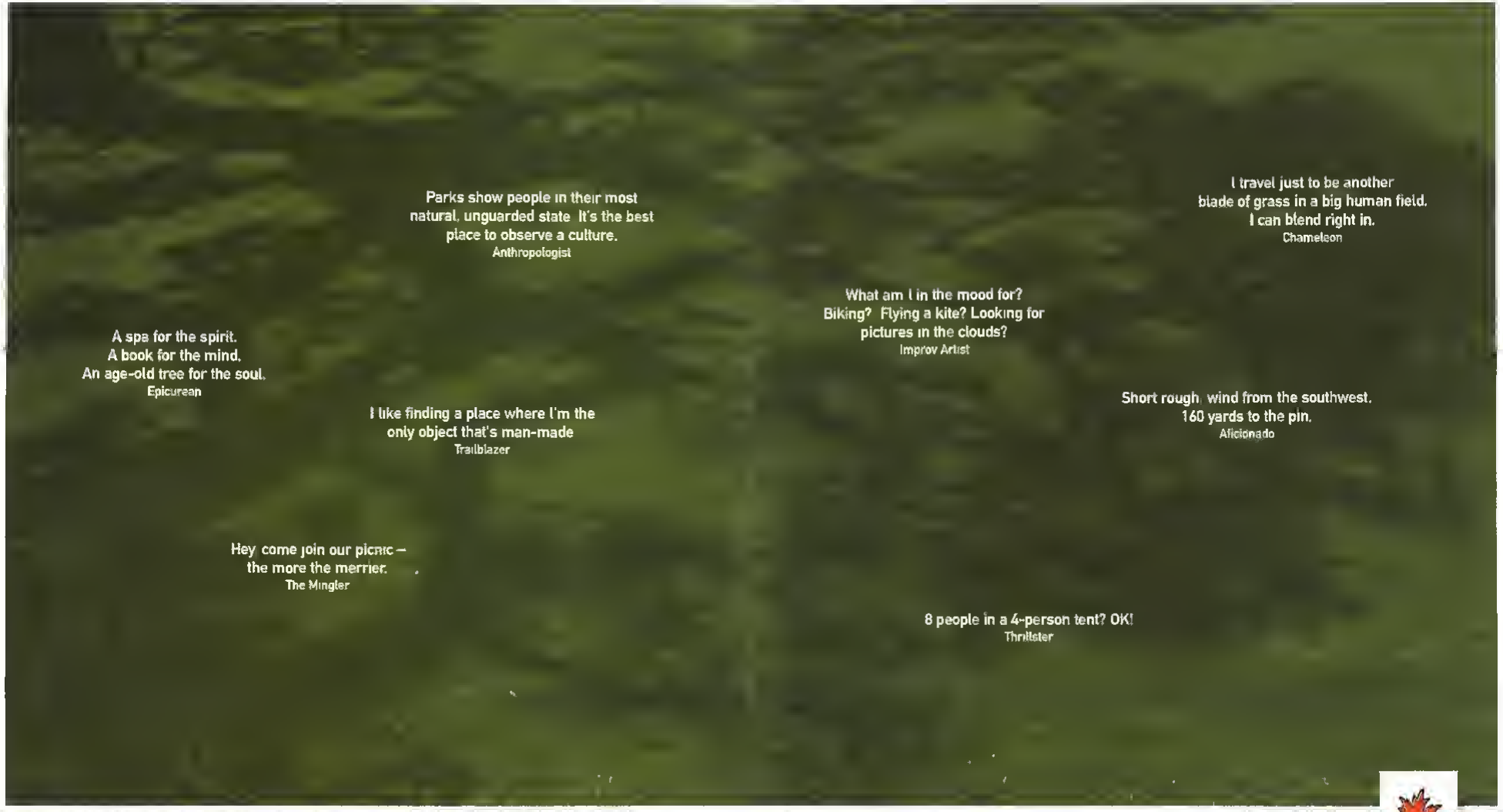
But it isn't, of course. We are out here too, watching. What we see is a party more willing to close ranks than to hold its would-be leaders to a minimum standard of behaviour. It's a familiar sight. This is the party which, in 2002, prepared to eject Jean Chrétien from the leadership without even requiring that Paul Martin ask them to do so. It's a party that didn't say boo when Martin opened a riding for a supporter, Ruby Dhalla, by appointing the incumbent, Sarkis Assadourian, as his "Special Adviser for Near East and South Caucasus Affairs." The Liberals have learned to depend too heavily on the carefully averted gaze.

Many Canadians are averting their own gaze. Elections Canada figures show that six times as many Canadians donated to the Conservative party in the first quarter of 2006 as donated to the Liberals. Even the New Democrats drew the support of twice as many individual donors as did the Liberals. The Liberals tended to draw larger individual donations, most of them from adults unaffiliated with Apotex, but that still put the Liberals only $200,000 ahead of the NDP in voluntary donations. And as part of a broad campaign to dismantle entrenched Liberal advantage, a campaign that includes fixed election dates, Stephen Harper's federal accountability act reduces the upper limit on campaign donations, skimming off that layer of big donors on which the Liberals, uniquely, rely.

"We've been going to the 44th floor for our money for too long," Michael Ignatieff told me last week. Mind you, he was speaking in general terms. When Volpe bypassed the 44th floor for the company daycare, Ignatieff protested no more loudly than the rest, which is to say not at all. The Liberals' fundraising shambles is, in part, a reflection of their absurd—there's that word again—party structure. It is literally impossible to join the Liberal Party of Canada. You have to join the Liberal party of New Brunswick or Manitoba or wherever, because the party is no more than an archipelago of provincial associations, each with incompatible membership rules. So the party of strong central government is in fact an impoverished little Brussels. And the choice of party president this autumn may be more important than the choice of leader—or would be, if any candidate for president were willing to overhaul the party organization. But to *become* president, you have to pay homage to the party's genteel fictions about itself.

With its Quebec electoral base shattered, its reliable stock of Ontario seats cut in half, and its potential for western growth outside British Columbia close to zero, it has suddenly become hard to claim that the Liberal Party of Canada is a national party. But since it's not, strictly speaking, *illegal* to claim the Liberals are a national party, I'm sure they'll keep doing it. M

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How can a boycott of Israel help science or academia?



ANDREW FOTTER

Those humanities professors sure do get up to some wacky stuff. When they aren't looking at the philosophy of Homer Simpson, they're off investigating gay undercurrents in the Kirk/Spock dynamic. In the *National Post* last week, the McGill economist William Watson got in some good jousts about one sociologist doing work on the significance of socks, another looking at the importance of doors.

There's nothing like kicking the profs while they're down. This is academic-bashing season, after all, with York University in Toronto hosting the annual Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Colloquially referred to as "The Learneds" (except to grad students, who call it "The Stupids"), the congress is a meta-conference that brings together 8,000 scholars from more than 70 disciplines and scholarly associations across the country.

It's also one of the few occasions on which the mainstream media pay any attention to what the country's academics are up to. The usual sport around this time is to scan the list of scheduled presentations, pick out the dumb-sounding ones, and stir up a piece (two parts mocking to one part outrage) denouncing it all as a fraud and a waste with no legitimate role in a pluralistic, democratic society.

But behind this lightly mocking anti-intellectualism lies the important question of to what—and to whom—academics are responsible. If the standard worry is that professors are too aloof from reality, there is also the obverse concern, that they sometimes involve themselves too much in mundane matters. As a result, academics are in a bit of a bind when they work on stuff like socks and doors, we accuse them of triviality and money wasting. But if they tackle the big serious stuff, we tell them to stick to their knitting and get back in the library.

If William Watson exemplifies the first tendency, recent events in Britain highlight the perils of the second. On May 30, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, the country's largest union of university lecturers, voted in favour of a boycott of Israeli professors who do not publicly dissociate themselves from Israel's "apartheid policies."

The point of this non-binding resolution is to encourage individual lecturers to sever their professional ties with Israeli colleagues who are not suitably pro-Palestinian. Presumably that means things like not inviting Israelis to conferences, turning down invitations to speak in Israel, refusing to write reference letters or consider job applications for Israelis, and not dealing with journals that have Israelis on their editorial boards.

Anti-Israeli sentiment among U.K. academics is something that crops up fairly regularly. Last year, another union, the Association of University Teachers, representing 40,000 instructors, voted to boycott two Israeli universities for allegedly undermining academic freedom and the rights of Palestinians. And in 2002, a professor at the University of Manchester fired two academics from the boards of two journals simply because they were Israeli. Her actions caused an international outcry, and led to the direct intervention of Tony Blair.

The most recent boycott was passed in the teeth of substantial opposition, both in Britain and abroad. Many academics have protested what they see as the campaign's "McCarthyite" and anti-Semitic overtones. It has even brought some of the usual suspects out of the woodwork: the day after the NATFHE vote, the U.S.-based Anti-Defamation League urged U.S. universities and grant-giving bodies to boycott the boycotters, by refusing to deal with any academic who advocates a boycott of Israel.

Of all the voices raised against the original boycott, the most important were those that pointed out how self-defeating it is. For example, the board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science adopted a resolution calling the boycott antithetical to the spirit of scholarship, noting that "free scientific inquiry and associated international collaborations should not be compromised in order to advance a political agenda unrelated to scientific and scholarly matters."

Exactly right. The great advantage of the ivory tower is that it walls itself off from political disputes, allowing its residents to get on with the search for truth—the only legitimate purpose of academic research. Research is by its very nature collective and fully cosmopolitan endeavour, and it cannot follow

Another usual suspect, the Anti-Defamation League, is urging a boycott of the boycotters



PROTESTING a campaign that has 'McCarthyite' overtones

fashion or ideology or be limited by lines drawn on maps. Which is what makes the NATFHE boycott so obscene: the idea that truth should be handed over as a hostage to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an abdication of the British lecturers' professional mission.

Does this mean that Harold Innis was right when he claimed that the university is and ought to remain an ivory tower, accountable only to itself, with no obligation to justify its activities to society at large? Well, no. The difficult question is precisely how academics are to strike a balance between ivory tower cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and public engagement and good citizenship on the other. There are no easy answers. What happens in our universities affects the rest of society. As the former president of Queen's University, J.A. Corry, argued in his book *Farewell the Ivory Tower*, the university is both guardian and servant of the public interest, and it cannot remain completely aloof from the rest of society and retain the confidence of the public. "The universities need to keep in close touch with the workaday world," Corry wrote. "Common sense and practicality never come amiss, even in universities."

That is easier said than accomplished. As the battle over the NATFHE resolution continues to rage, common sense and practicality are commodities in very short supply. M

ODD ANDERSEN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



STORY OF THE WEEK—MAYHEM & TRAGEDY IN IRAQ

U.S. military officials confirmed that a preliminary investigation found evidence that Marines massacred approximately 24 Iraqi civilians last November in the town of Haditha northwest of Baghdad, apparently in retaliation for a roadside bomb attack. Just as details of the Haditha incident were emerging, U.S. troops accidentally killed a pregnant Iraqi woman when the car she was travelling in failed to stop at a checkpoint. She was reportedly being rushed to hospital to give birth.

Good news

Working for change

With a financial crisis in the offing, the Palestinian Authority admitted last week that it is thinking about firing some 11,500 government employees who do not regularly show up for work, and another 5,000 who are past the mandatory retirement age of 60. The Hamas controlled regime has been under enormous international pressure in recent months. Western nations have cut aid in hopes of convincing the party to recognize Israel's right to exist. Hamas has not budged on Israel, but its administrative reforms are a welcome, if unexpected, turn of events. The PA has been plagued since its inception by corruption and waste. A cleanup effort is a first step toward a stable, viable government. Step two, of course, is renouncing terror and accepting Israel, but from Hamas, all progress is welcome.

Accounting for Ottawa

Senator Hugh Segal last week tabled a bill that would require all government departments to report quarterly financial performance as though they were public companies. The suggestion is especially timely given last week's testimony from former bureaucrat John Wiersema. He told the public accounts committee that the accounting on $21.8 million in costs related to the gun registry was intentionally fudged because the former Liberal government wanted to conceal its spiralling costs. Such antics tend to be accepted as part of the Canadian political culture, in the real world, they are considered accounting scandals and CEOs serve jail time for them. Senator Segal's bill offers hope for change. Why did it take this long for someone to suggest it?

Tastes good, too

Chocolate has been proven to possess superpowers. Microbiologists at the University of Birmingham have figured out how to convert candy into electricity. The team fed diluted chocolate-factory waste to bacteria, which consumed the sugar and produced hydrogen, which was then used to power a fuel cell with enough electricity to propel a small fan. In West Virginia, researchers at Wheeling Jesuit University conducted studies which found that milk chocolate contains stimulants that can boost mental acuity—confirming empirically what women have known intuitively for ages.

Woodcock's gift

The estate of George Woodcock—the Winnipeg-born poet, essayist and philosopher who died in 1995—donated $1.9 million to the Writers' Trust of Canada. It is the largest cash donation to writers in Canadian history—a gift made all the more heartwarming coming from a self-made intellectual who grew up barely above the poverty line.

Bad news

Poisoning children

Health officials say that governments are not doing enough to protect children from toxic environmental chemicals. Recent tests in southern China found traces of cancer-linked dyes in roughly 10 per cent of children's clothing. Chinese officials are also warning of poisonous baby bottles, believed to have been made from recycled compact discs containing dangerous chemicals that dissolve in heated milk. Closer to home, a Canadian health and environment advocacy group, Environmental Defence, least week released an alarming report that chemicals including flame retardants, lead and PCBs are being found in the bodies of Canadian children as young as 10.

Exploiting children

It was a bad week for the exploitation of children in Europe. First, a judge in Ireland overturned the conviction of a 41-year old man who admitted to having sex with a 12-year old girl, this came after the country's Supreme Court ruled the country's sexual consent law is unconstitutional. At the same time, pedophiles in the Netherlands announced plans to form a political party dedicated to cutting the age of sexual consent to 12, and eventually eliminating such limits altogether. Fringe groups have been making similar arguments for years, but the fringe is where they belong.

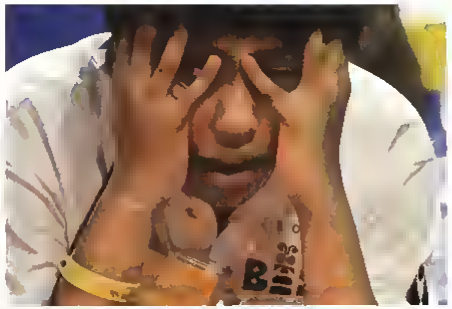
Slighting children

For the first time in 50 years, schoolchildren will not tote orange boxes from house to house this Halloween to collect donations of pocket change for UNICEF. Last week, the organization officially discontinued its annual box collection campaign, which brings in approximately $3 million annually for the children's charity. According to UNICEF Canada, the process of sorting and counting the coins had become too time consuming for school administrators. Also, some parents were concerned about children carrying money at night. UNICEF will continue to work with Canadian schools to raise money in the fall. However, each school will now work separately to develop targeted fundraising campaigns for their own communities. So much for national traditions.

Still no HBO

Next week HBO premieres a handful of new shows including *Dane Cook's Tourgasm*, a docu-comedy series following four stand-up comedians as they tour across the U.S. from California to Boston, entertaining crowds and fighting amongst themselves. Think *Spinal Tap* meets *Comedian*. Critics have been enthusiastic, but as usual, we'll have to wait for the DVD, since HBO still isn't available in Canada. M

FACE OF THE WEEK



UNDER PRESSURE: Samir Sudhir Patel, 12, of Texas, faces round five of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington

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7 DAYS



A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO

The 48-year-old bachelor prince has long been rumoured to be gay, but any lingering suspicions died last week when the son of Grace Kelly fessed up to fathering a second child, Jazmin (left), the 14-year-old by-product of a tryst with a then-married California waitress who once holidayed in the Côte d'Azur enclave. Last year he admitted to siring a boy with Nicole Coste, a Togolese-born stewardess, in 2003. Neither child will be able to lay claim to the Grimaldi throne.



DISCOVERY

Bigger and nastier

Poison ivy just loves global warming. Not only is it increasing in numbers but the virulence of its allergens is going up. When there's more carbon dioxide in the air, says Jacqueline Mohan, a scientist at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Mass., "Poison ivy grows not only faster and bigger but also more poisonous." She notes that higher atmospheric CO_2 in an intact forest ecosystem increases photosynthesis, resulting in more production of noxious leaves.

The fifth dimension

The general theory of relativity states there are four dimensions: three spatial ones plus time. But physicists are exploring another model that questions whether other dimensions could exist: does our universe float inside a larger universe with a fourth spatial dimension? The idea stems from attempts to unify relativity with quantum mechanics through the possibility that small black holes, the mass of minor asteroids, exist in the cosmos. The key is to detect the holes. Next year NASA will launch a space telescope capable of detecting high-energy gamma rays that may show the presence of the holes and, just possibly, other dimensions.

Red-eye and age

The technology behind digital cameras' ability to correct the "red-eye" effect caused by camera flashes could be applied to determining people's ages in mug shots. As humans age, the ability of their pupils to expand in dim light diminishes. A digital camera that corrects the red reflected off a person's retina in a camera flash could also measure the width of pupils to estimate their age.



SURE-FOOTED TREE FROG. A gripping account of its feet

Frogs get a grip

Moving around is a delicate balance for tree frogs: they can strongly grip slippery surfaces even when their feet are wet, but they can easily jump when the need arises. Scientists have learned that the toe pads of frogs are covered with fine hexagonal cells with channels between them. Each cell in turn is covered with microscopic bumps. Over the cells there is a micro-thin layer of mucous barely stickier than water. The bumpy cells enable frogs to grip, the mucous allows them to jump. The findings could have applications in designing better anti-slip surfaces, such as for auto tires.

WILD KINGDOM

Garden leopard

Many people keep cats in their homes without bothering neighbours, much less the authorities, but when Todd Dalton received word from a local London council that he had to get rid of his feline, he fought back. Last week, local magistrates overruled the local council and said Dalton could keep his pet, a leopard, in his backyard.

The lost world

A genuine lost world has been found beneath Israel. Scientists have found eight new species of creatures inside a cave that was uncovered during quarry digging. The ecosystem, said to date back five million years, was completely cut off from the outside world. Scientists found crustaceans and other invertebrates, all of them blind, indicating they'd lost their sight through evolution inside the lightless cave.

MORTALITY

C-section hazards

The more Caesarean sections a woman has, the greater the possibility of serious complications, reports the medical journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*. A study of 30,000 women who underwent C-sections without labour found that as women had more of the birth procedures, the number of alarming complications arose, including urinary or bowel injury, placental problems, the need for blood transfusions of four or more units, ICU admission and use of ventilators. Among the women, more than 6,300 were having their third C-sections, 1,450 their fourth, 258 a fifth, and 89 were undergoing their sixth or higher procedure.

Eating out of fear

Obesity among lower-income women may be a result of "food insecurity"—women's fear that they are unable to get meals on the table for their families. The study of more than 10,000 people found that low-income women concerned about getting balanced meals to their families were 58 to 76 per cent more likely to be obese. A theory stemming from the findings is that, when food is less scarce, people overeat, especially cheap but high-calorie food.

That creepy feeling

A new report in the *American Journal of Clinical Dermatology* is one of the first to focus attention on a little-known, gruesome disease, the existence of which many medical experts refuse to acknowledge. Patients with "Morgellons disease" report the sensation of insects or parasites roaming under their skin and open lesions oozing fibres as thick as spaghetti. Most patients also cite a "brain fog." What little research has been done on the illness shows that the "fibres" are not items such as household lint. Still, many experts dismiss the illness as "delusions of parasitosis."

KIDS TODAY

Your kids know

Parents say it's not the case, but a new study of whether U.S. kids know where guns are hidden in the house says that 39 per cent of respondents know exactly



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THE WEEK AHEAD...SCAMS AND EXAMS

The World Cup opens, but in Italy, newly appointed national soccer commissioner Guido Rossi will begin investigating a spreading corruption scandal that has seen allegations of fiddling with referee assignments, illegal betting and even rigging of games. In China, 9.5 million students will take college entrance exams. With only 2.6 million undergraduate positions open, some universities will jam cellphone signals to reduce the possibility of cheating.





COTTAGE COUNTRY: Escalating

where the firepower is. And 22 per cent say they've even handled the guns despite parents' belief to the contrary. The study of 201 children found that five year olds were just as likely to handle the guns as 14-year-olds. An earlier study revealed that 1.7 million American children live in homes with unlocked and loaded guns.

Uniform respect

Who has more respect for police and other officials in uniform: young people or their baby boomer parents? A new British survey shows that it's teens and young adults who respect the Man more. A quarter of 16- to 24-year-olds claim to respect uniformed personnel, while only 13 per cent of people 55 to 64 share that opinion.

MONEY

The price of brats

Bringing up children is expensive. Bringing up badly behaved children is even more expensive. British psychiatrists have calculated the annual cost at about $12,200 extra for kids with very anti-social behaviour. Included are about $65 a year in home repairs and $160 in lost work time spent dealing with the brats. But the biggest expense is about $9,300 for extra housework in cleaning up after a bad kid. Meanwhile, only about $20 per person is spent on mental health treatments for minors.

Paradise at a price

The average price for a vacation home in Canada is now greater than the average cost for a principal residence. A real estate brokerage has found the average price to be $380,507 for a waterfront cottage, compared to $340,956 for the standard two-storey home. Chalets tend to be even pricier. In some areas, such as Alberta's Sylvan Lake, the price has risen to an average of $900,000 and as high as $2 million. Demand in Alberta has seen prices jump by 30 to 60 per cent.

POLL WATCH

Drunk on the job

One in six workers in Britain admit to having been under the influence of alcohol while on the job, either drinking at work or recovering from hangovers. The findings are part of a poll of 1,500 people by an insurance firm, and back up other studies showing up to a quarter of workplace accidents result from boozing.

Divine intervention

Weary of widespread corruption, a majority of Jamaicans have embraced a call by their new prime minister, Portia Simpson Miller, to install church pastors on public boards to combat graft and skimming. A poll published in the Kingston *Gleaner* found that 58 per cent of Jamaicans have endorsed Miller's proposal, first outlined in an April speech in which she declared, "Every board must have a pastor, either as chairman or as a member of the board to ensure probity."

IN OTHER NEWS

Calf compact

Victor Gardnet has a history of burglaries, but nothing like what he was arrested for last week in Ogdensburg, N.Y.: he rustled seven calves from an area farm, then made his getaway with an accomplice in the passenger seat and the seven animals either in the back seat or in the trunk of a 2000 Dodge Neon. Only two of the stolen calves have been recovered.

Eating their words

Notorious for their brawling, Taiwan's parliamentarians last week again broke into fisticuffs over the opposition's proposal to end a half-century ban on direct transportation links with the Chinese mainland. The fight was distinguished by Wang Shu-hui, an outraged female member of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, who joined a rush by fellow party members to the podium to prevent the proposal from being heard. Wang then snatched the proposal and tried to eat it. The opposition tried to get her to cough up the legislation by pulling her hair. Wang later spat the document out and tore it up.



SCENE FROM IMAMURA'S *Black Rain*. Part of Japan's new wave

IN PASSING

Shohei Imamura, 79, filmmaker. A two-time Palme d'Or winner at the Cannes festival, he was a pioneer in Japan's new wave. His films included *Black Rain*, about the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Jacques Bouchard, 75, ad executive. A pioneer of advertising in Quebec, he started out flogging consumer goods but became equally adept at marketing people, including the Pope's 1984 visit to Quebec, and is said to have been the architect behind "Trudeaumania." M

ANDREW BORDWIN/BEATEWORKS/CORBIS (LEFT) EVERETT COLLECTION

CAPITAL DIARY

LAUREEN'S BOAST, STOCKWELL'S VEST, GARTH'S BOOTS.
OTTAWA OUTTAKES BY MITCHEL RAPHAEL

BIKER CHICKS RUMBLE?

Last week, Reform party icon **Deborah Grey** was in the capital, visiting former staff and attending the National Prayer Breakfast. What does Parliament Hill's original biker chick think of **Laureen Harper**'s motorcycle? "It's a little smaller. I'm riding a 1500 Honda Valkyrie," Grey, who is now a professional speaker, said she could easily take Mrs. Harper, but, sadly, the Conservatives recently announced a plan to outlaw street racing. Still, Mrs Harper told me: "I could beat her in the bush off roading. Mine is a dirt bike."



DEBORAH GREY (left) says her bike could take Laureen Harper's



JE M'EXCUSE. IT'S MY FRENCH NIGHT.

Laureen Harper's date at last week's Politics and the Pen bash at Ottawa's Fairmont Chateau Laurier hotel was Treasury Board prez **John Baird** (the PM was busy chatting with premiers). The $15,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing that night went to **Miriam Shuchman**'s *The Drug Trial: Nancy Olivieri and the Science Scandal that Rocked the Hospital for Sick Children*. Sheila Copps, one of the jurors for the prize, was wearing shoes similar to those once worn by the Wicked Witch of the East. **Stockwell Day** had on a printed vest (eek!). Also in attendance was retired MP **John Reynolds** and the former PM's wife, **Sheila Martin**.

NDP MP **Libby Davies** (Vancouver East) was there with her partner of seven years, **Kim Elliott**, the managing editor of *rabble.ca*. Lamest Performance: the emceeing by **Rona Ambrose** and CTV's **Tom Clark** (it's a room filled with literati like **Shyam Selvadurai**—some good lines are required, people!). Best Moment: *Double Exposure*'s **Bob Robertson** impersonating prime ministers and noting that Liberal leadership contenders were unable to attend because "Wednesday is their French immersion night."



GARTH TURNER and Lauren Bush like the same boots

GARTH TURNER BOOTED

Ontario MP **Garth Turner**, who lives in the same Ottawa condo building as **Belinda Stronach**, loves his cowboy footwear. He buys Liberty boots by **Tony Benattar**, a designer raised in Montreal, now living in Toronto—the same brand worn by Madonna, **Avril Lavigne** and **George W Bush**'s model niece **Lauren Bush**. Back in the '80s, Benattar's first boots were made in Mexico by a factory owned by the family of curent president **Vicente Fox**. Way to go NAFTA!

WHAT STEPHEN COULDN'T TELL JACK

Back in the day, **Brian Mulroney** was criticized for using Cadillacs. Now **Stephen Harper**'s getting hammered for his new SUVs. But even after being pummelled about it by **Jack Layton** during Question Period, Harper has refused to justify adding the gas-guzzling 320-h.p. Chevrolet Tahoes to his motorcade (à la **George W Bush**). The PM can't comment on his security arrangements, and RCMP media reps are also mum. But you can't swing a cat in Ottawa without hitting someone in the security service, and one insider told me that SUVs allow officers to observe from a higher position, which enhances security. I'm sure al-Qaeda didn't see that one coming.

RONA AMBROSE GOES GREEN

Global warming isn't the only heat that Enviro Minister **Rona Ambrose** has been feeling lately. All three opposition parties are hot and bothered that she's pulling out of the Kyoto accord and being hazy about a new environmental plan. Quebec Liberal MP **Denis Coderre** said, "She's walking behind [Harper's] SUVs" and sniffing the fumes. But Ambrose did wear a nice light green outfit and green shoes last week in the House. It's a start, Ms. Ambrose, but don't expect a Christmas card on recycled paper from **David Suzuki** yet.



LOOK AT ME, David Suzuki

PARTY WHIP GETS USED

Conservative party whip **Jay Hill** is giving up his SUV. This is a man who has a collection of Caterpillar heavy machinery miniatures in his office (the B.C. MP used to operate life size bulldozers and backhoe loaders). But Hill is getting a second-hand Ford pickup truck in July. He says nine out of 10 vehicles in his riding are trucks or SUVs. No smart car for this MP. In his riding, says Hill, "You'd probably get run over." M

Mitchel Raphael can be contacted at mitchelraphael@attglobal.net



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Women especially see conversation as 'you share something and the other person is supportive.' Blame Oprah.

ESSAYIST STEPHEN MILLER TALKS TO KENNETH WHYTE ABOUT HIS NEW BOOK *CONVERSATION: A HISTORY OF A DECLINING ART*

Q *Your book argues that conversation is a dying art. Its golden age was the 18th century, when it was possible to see conversing, in a single room, such intellectual giants as Samuel Johnson, Adam Smith, Edward Gibbon and David Hume. Why should we care that the art of conversation is dying—what's been lost? What good is it?*

A: Well, Hume and Johnson disagreed about religion and a lot of other things, but on conversation they agreed that it had three benefits. One, psychological. Johnson in particular thought that if you didn't spend a lot of time with other people your dark passions might triumph. This is especially his own problem, because he thought he would go mad if he didn't spend time with people. But Hume and Smith also thought that you need to spend time in what Hume called the conversable world—it's good for your psyche, you're going to be more stable, steady, and you also get more pleasure out of life. The second thing is intellectual. Hume and Johnson both argued that you really have to test your ideas with other people. If you just create them in the university it's dangerous. Most of the great ideas that Hume and Smith developed were sort of tested in clubs in Edinburgh. The last thing is political. They all thought that England was sort of a melancholy nation, and that if they spent more time in coffee houses and being sociable, they'd be less likely to be infected with zealotry—they worried about religious enthusiasm—and less likely to be infected with any kind of extreme passion, so it would make for a more civil population.

Q: *Is there any reason to think those benefits wouldn't flow today from conversation?*

A: The benefits exist. A number of studies have said that being with other people is good for your mental health—you're probably going to live longer, you're going to have intellectual stimulation, stuff like that. But if you go to a Starbucks now—I sort of do this informal survey all the time—you see three quarters of the people with their computer on or their cellphone, so we have all this technology that undermines or makes face-to-face conversation difficult. I argue that face-to-face conversation is the ideal form of conversation because you have nuance, you have gesture, you have tone. Phone conversation is second-best, and electronic conversation is bad in general, because things go awry in emails. I just had two examples in my own life in the last month where I had crazy emails from friends that misunderstood something I said.

Q. *The same technologies are very present in our homes. That would indicate families aren't talking much either.*

A. There was a study in England that showed families are not having meals together. I have an example in my book—this is an extreme version—of a Washington family where there are three children, but every person has their own room and they all sort of say hello and then go and communicate with each other in the same house by instant messaging. And of course a lot of people have television on all the time. Then they're distracted by phones, and I think all these things undermine conversation. A teenage niece of mine—her father was complaining to me that she just goes home, grunts something to her parents, and runs up to her room and does email, instant messaging or whatever, for six hours.

Q: *Kids aren't stupid and they like to communicate. If email and text messaging are difficult mediums to converse in, why aren't they picking up the phone? What do they find so satisfying about these alternatives?*

A: Well, I think with instant messaging and email there's less risk involved. In other words, you can get out of it instead of making a fool of yourself, you don't worry about boring someone. You're more in control. Also, you can say things that you wouldn't say in person—you can create a character. You can put your best face forward. So if anyone is the least bit shy or uncomfortable with face-to-face interaction this is the way to go.

Q: *So what's a healthy amount of conversation in the home?*

A: It would be very nice if a family sat down together for dinner and just chatted about their day, or if a sensitive topic came up, they could discuss it without screaming at each other. I have to compliment myself right now because I have two grown daughters and we were in a restaurant in New York having lunch,

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and as we were leaving, the waiter said, "Gosh, you guys talk so well with each other! I haven't seen a family like that for a long time." So, you know, I don't know how you promote this if you don't have it, but I think one thing you have to do is, say, leave your cellphones, your iPods and TV off. With those things as a distraction, you're never going to have a conversation

Q: *Let's say a family, like the one in Washington you used as an example, decides to sit down for dinner. What should they talk about?*

A: Oh, I say in my book any subject is fine. A number of the reviewers picked up this quote I had from Virginia Woolf where she describes a forum in which you're not allowed to say anything serious. I mean, she liked conversation too, but she liked it to be not solemn—it could range about a wide variety of topics. In my own family we talk about everything, and we get into arguments. Rarely do they go off the rails so we have to stop, but sometimes they do. I mean, there is that risk always, and nowadays the risk is worse because people are easily offended if you disagree with them.

Q: *Yeah, that kind of forestalls conversation, doesn't it? People just seem to be, on the one hand, touchy themselves, but also fearful of giving offence.*

A: Another recent book on conversation mentions that a woman stopped having dinner parties because people started screaming at each other. Now she just prefers to watch talk shows. I think it's a problem, and I think people have to learn how to be good-humoured, and so if they do criticize someone they do it in a good-humoured fashion. And then people have to get away from this notion that conversation is autobiographical and you support somebody for their view of life. No, it's not autobiographical. When you go to the conversable world you leave your personal, your inner life, somewhere else. That's hard for people. We live in a world where everybody is psychological, and so I think a lot of women in particular see conversation as, you say something and then the other person... you *share* something and the other person is supportive.

Q: *Supportive, yes. It's like the Oprah-ization of conversation.*

A: Absolutely. I think it makes conversation impossible, because when people use the word "share"—after all when you share some food with someone the person isn't supposed to say, "Oh, thanks for giving me this pie, but it's terrible, I don't like it"—it just casts a blanket of excessive politeness on the conversation, and then disagreement is seen as a personal attack.

Q: *What makes a good conversationalist? What are the essential attributes?*

A: Well, first you have to be a good listener, and most people are bad listeners because I think it's something you have to learn, and it's not easy to learn. We naturally want to dominate, we want to talk ourselves. The second thing is being good-humoured, not to get angry or pontificate or be dogmatic. I mean, if you have both those things then you're 90 per cent there. Of course there are other things—it's good to be witty, but how many people are that clever? But people who are good listeners and who are good-humoured will have better conversations, and more of them.

Q: *There is a sense—and I guess this is related to the Oprah thing—that people feel that in order to contribute to a conversation you should talk about your personal problems, what you're upset about or angry about—that you should unburden yourself to your listener. You're saying that's a no-no?*

A: I think it's a big no-no. If someone wants to make a point about something that happened to him medically and it fits the story and it's not too long, fine. But do you want friends who are needy, who always come to you with their personal problems, asking "What do I do now?" These friends are a burden and eventually you won't want to spend time with them. In the 18th-century coffee houses and clubs, people didn't go to burden others with their problems. I think this brings us back to the Oprah thing. People want to give advice or they want advice—if you watch Oprah nobody says to Oprah, "Oh, I don't agree with you, Oprah," they always come on the program and either tell some life story that's sort of moving or they want Oprah to tell them how to live their lives.

Q: *In terms of conversational style, is it necessary to keep up a steady flow of thoughts and words? Is there room for pauses and silence for consideration, reflection within conversation?*

A: Yes. I don't think you can have conversation go the pace of repartee in an Oscar Wilde play. I mean, real-life conversation is filled with pauses. But what you don't want is one person telling a long-winded story, one person dominating the conversation, you want some give-and-take.

Q: *A person should be able to make a pause or just maintain silence without being considered autistic or something.*

A: Yeah, it's a question of how long. But some people are just not as forthright or as gregarious as others, and they can still participate in a conversation but in a lesser way.

Q: *There is a tradition in American culture—in literature, in movies—of a more laconic approach to conversing. You note its presence in Hemingway novels and film noir. Real men don't talk. Conversation is artificial and inauthentic.*

A: It's fake, right. There are two things going on. First, there's Rousseau's notion about conversation, the whole good-humoured banter and politeness—the traits Hume and Johnson and other 18th-century writers praised. Rousseau despised the world of the salon, he thought men who went regularly to an evening thing run by a woman were emasculating themselves. So he promotes that notion that talking is emasculating. But in the American tradition there's also this other aspect, that American men are strong and they say their point of view and they don't talk a lot, and to talk a lot is somehow not masculine.

Q: *You document a lot of trends that seem to be going against a more conversational society, and toward a more atomized and isolated social structure. Is it fair to say you are pessimistic about the future of conversation?*

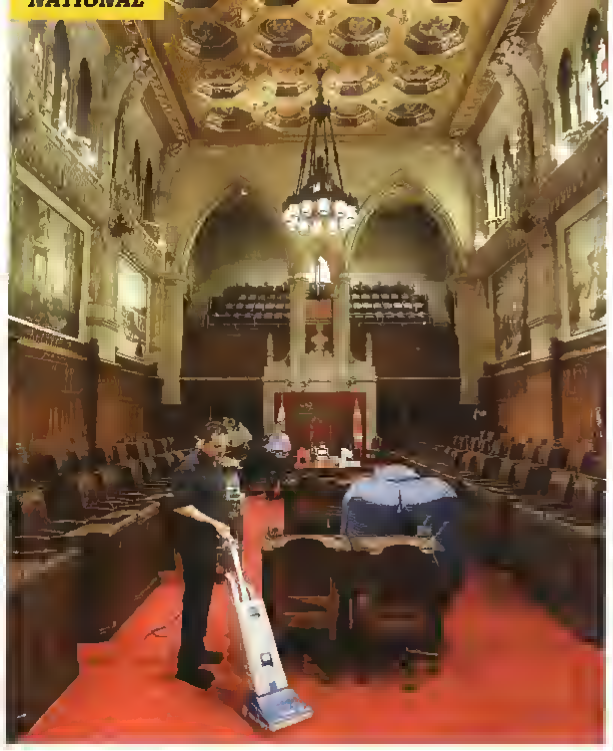
A: A number of reviewers and talk show hosts really were disturbed by my negative view of the future. I do qualify it, I do point out some positive trends, like discussion groups, book clubs, and so forth and so on, but to me that's a very small number of people, and I do say the forces undermining conversation are stronger than the forces nourishing it. It does seem like we're overwhelmed with these electronic distractions that make it easy for people to sort of cocoon themselves. You know, they get up in the morning and they put on their electronic gear. I look out my window and I see teenagers waiting for a school bus, all with their iPods on. They go home and play video games. I can't imagine that video games are too good for promoting sociability. M



'The parents and kids communicate with each other in the same house by instant messaging'

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/GETTY IMAGES





ONE VIEW OF a reformed Senate is as a check on the power of prime ministers

CLEANING UP THE UPPER HOUSE

Even those who want Senate reform are unsure how Harper will do it—or why.

BY JOHN GEDDES

Billed as a "first step" in Senate reform, Stephen Harper's proposal last week to limit new senators to eight-year terms seemed more overdue than audacious. Senators now serve from the day they are lucky enough to be appointed until they turn 75, sometimes several pleasant decades. Sen. Pierrette Ringuette, for instance, who was named to the upper chamber by Jean Chrétien in 2002, can stay until 2030. (If he's able to attend her retirement bash, the former prime minister will be 96.) Who could object to shortening the payoff period for Ottawa's cushiest patronage prize, which now comes with a base salary of $122,700 per year? But a first step implies more strides to come, and the Prime Minister has signalled that he intends this modest one to begin the march toward electing senators—a potentially far reaching, and contentious, shift in who wields political power.

Harper has brought the Senate back to the centre of debate about the state of Canadian democracy after years out of the spotlight. The heyday of western agitation for a new kind of Senate—elected, effective and with an equal number from each province—is long past. It faded fast after Canadians rejected the 1992 Charlottetown accord, which would have overhauled the Senate along those Triple-E lines, in a referendum. The case that alienated westerners could only gain real power in Ottawa in an overhauled Red Chamber would be harder to make nowadays. After all, an Albertan is PM. When Harper promised during the recent election that a Conservative government would create "a new national process for choosing elected senators from each province and territory," the pledge sounded almost nostalgic, a nod to his party's Reform wing, and the era when Alberta farmer Bert Brown plowed the words Triple-E into his wheat field.

The campaign promise was never touted as a top priority. But last week's move suddenly made a full-scale Senate overhaul a real possibility, though details remain sketchy. Even those who applaud Harper for reviving the issue wonder how he plans to move forward from eight-year terms to elections, and are also curious about the main objective of reform.

Harper was vague on how he hopes to create an elected Senate. Direct elections with binding results would require provincial agreement for reforming the Constitution—an extraordinarily tall order, and a risky political undertaking, as the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accord debacles proved. It's more likely that Harper wouldn't try to tamper with a prime minister's right to appoint senators, but only introduce a practice of naming those who won some sort of non-binding vote. "We're still looking at how exactly we'll do that," he said, adding that he is "just trying to get some consensus" on the mechanism. One of the tricky aspects of any switch to naming elected senators would be managing the transition from the current patronage system to one that has democratic legitimacy. It seems likely that the Senate would for some years be made up of a mix of appointed and elected members—a potentially awkward blend.

Consider the timetable for appointments. Out of the 105 Senate seats, seven are currently vacant, and Harper has vowed not to fill them until a system for electing senators is devised. Another 49 senators will reach mandatory retirement age over the next nine years. That means that within a decade the majority of serving senators might be elected. By that point, probably before it, the convention that the Senate must, with rare exceptions, pass the bills sent to it by the House would likely be obsolete. Some new understanding of the role of senators would have to emerge. But to what extent would a Senate that combined democratic legitimacy with the taint of patronage be justified in picking and choosing among bills passed by MPs? "A two-tiered Senate, with some who were appointed and some who were elected—that game isn't going to work," says Bruce Hicks, a University of Montreal expert on reforming democratic institutions.

But Roger Gibbins, president of the Canada West Foundation, sees a gradual transition toward that uncomfortable moment as the most promising route to true Senate reform, complete with constitutional amendments. "It's an argument I've always been hesitant to go public with," he admits. "But the only way you end up with more comprehensive reform is if you destabilize the status quo to the point where Canadians say, 'This is a mess, and we've got to sort this out.'" University of Calgary political science professor Ted Morton is another advocate of slowly changing the nature of the Senate by appointing members selected in non-binding elections, until the pressure to enshrine the new reality in the Constitution becomes undeniable.

If Harper is seen to be following that incrementalist strategy, opposition is bound to emerge. "The concept of gradually turning over to the Senate major law-making powers that have never existed in our constitutional tradition is something that should concern every Canadian," NDP Leader Jack Layton said last week. "We'll never open the door to that," Bloc Québécois Leader Gilles Duceppe said flatly when asked if an elected Senate with new powers might come about by stages.

And, in fact, the biggest question of all is just what powers a Senate with democratic legitimacy would have, and be inclined to use. Back in the early nineties, the priority was to use the Senate to bring regional power from the fringes to the centre. More recently, though, interest has shifted from redressing that perennial tension between heartland and hinterland, to creating an upper legislative body that would act as a check on the power of prime ministers. "Over time," says Gibbins, "I've found the regional representation argument less compelling than the need to have some sort of counterweight to the concentration of power [in the Prime Minister's Office]."

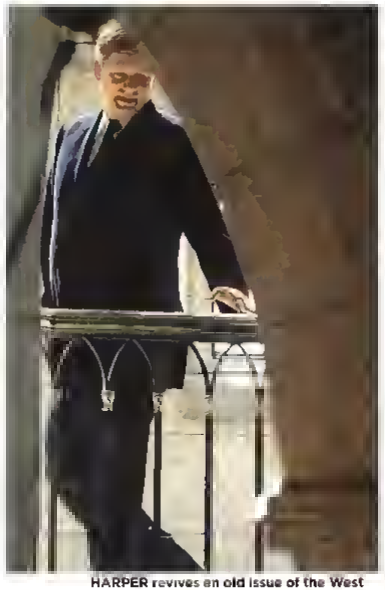
Still, Gibbins hasn't entirely lost interest in giving provincial and regional interests a more secure voice in federal decision-making. "We had this 30-year 'the West wants in' campaign," he said. "Well, the West *is* in, but we're in because of a particular Prime Minister being in office. What we want to do is put into play a modest set of institutional reforms so that we don't have to rely on the fickleness of the party system to provide regional representation." In other words, elect powerful senators who represent their province, and who would be independent of any prime minister and his contingent of MPs.

Senators playing that role would also compete with premiers for status as the true voice of their provinces in national affairs. Bruce Hicks puts it this way: "Who would speak more strongly for Alberta—a premier who was technically elected from just one very small riding, or a senator who represents the whole province?"

With that question hanging in the air, it's no surprise that many premiers are less than enthusiastic about a more potent Senate. Ontario's Dalton McGuinty is for abolishing it outright, and that's also the preference of B.C.'s Gordon Campbell, Saskatchewan's Lorne Calvert and Manitoba's Gary Doer. Ralph Klein favours an elected Senate, the long-standing Alberta position. A Senate designed as a vehicle for provincial concerns would throw into question the emerging role of the Council of the Federation, the premiers' club established in 2003 to forge a united front, when possible, in their negotiations with Ottawa. Gibbins sees the potential for making fed-prov wrangling less central to Canadian politics as one of the most appealing aspects of Senate reform. "I happen to come from Alberta, a province dominated by federal-provincial conflict," he says. "We've had a series of premiers going back a long time who have fought provincial elections against the federal government, instead of on how they would govern."

Senator Marjory LeBreton, Harper's Senate leader, suggests that anxiety over the Senate's future might be soothed by setting some limits on its role. She said even an elected Senate need not take on a significantly more activist role than its old "sober second thought" function of reviewing laws sent to it by the House. In particular, she said the tradition of not rejecting spending bills could be maintained. "I actually think that we could still have a role in the Senate similar to what it is now," LeBreton said in an interview. "The will of the House would not be thwarted on budgetary bills, and that would be understood even before [elected senators] took their seats in the Senate."

That conciliatory tone might help pave the way for whatever Harper has in mind. But with the premiers unconvinced and opposition politicians on alert, it's a safe bet his push for reform will spark stiff resistance in at least some quarters. On the road to a new Senate, last week's first step may well turn out to have been the only easy one. M



HARPER revives an old issue of the West

TOM HANSON/CP (TOP); PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN HAYWARD

FRED CHARTRAND/CP

'THE ONLY WAY TO TRUE REFORM IS TO DESTABILIZE TO THE POINT CANADIANS SAY: THIS IS A MESS'



COULD SHE MAKE IT? Senator Marjory LeBreton in Ottawa

Without charge, without trial, without hope

Security certificates are an indefinite sentence. Whatever happened to due process for all?

BY ALEXANDRE TRUDEAU ▸ For those who haven't done it, visiting a maximum security prison can be an adventure. There is drama in passing through one heavy metal door after another. It is somehow titillating to wait before a thick window, telephone receiver in hand, for a mystery man clad in orange to emerge behind the glass. It is cool to greet someone by pressing your hand up against the glass, his hand on the other side. Stimulating to have a stranger sit before you, a chance to discover and question someone who has been labelled an extremist by the Canadian government—according to them, linked to Osama bin Laden's "holy war."

So it is when I first meet Hassan Almrei.

My first impression of the orange-clad stranger is not what one might expect when coming face to face with a suspected terrorist. Hassan comes off as kind and gentle. Appearances may be misleading, but I have been to a few dangerous places in my time, some of them in the Middle East. Hassan has the kind of face I sought out in such places, where you cannot make it without the solicitude of others. You have to rely on strangers, and you seek out the kind faces, looking for something gentle in people amid the danger and the destruction. Had I met Hassan Almrei at the ends of the earth, I would have trusted him.

Instead, I meet Hassan here in Canada, at the Toronto West Detention Centre near Pearson International Airport. In these first encounters, in the spring of 2005, he tells me his story. Since October 2001, his home has been a nine-by-12-foot concrete cell. A small window well above his head lets in a little natural light. A fluorescent tube otherwise lights his cell, dimming slightly at night. His bed is a concrete slab with a thin mattress. A metal table is affixed to the wall. He has no chair. The door to his cell is steel; his meals are passed through a slot. Every day, he is allowed to leave his cell for a shower, always under supervision. A few times a week, he is permitted to stroll for a few minutes in an outside enclosure—concrete walls on all sides, but with an open sky above.

Hassan is a thin, gaunt man with a receding hairline and thick black moustache. He is soft-spoken yet decisive with his words. He also likes to laugh, and so we do—at the mountain of absurdities that he has faced, at the fact that for the first two years of his detention, his cell was poorly heated. We also laugh over the fact that he didn't have anything to read during his first years of detention, that he sat in his cell shivering under a blanket with nothing to do. There is a lot to laugh about, if you have a taste for the comedy of the absurd.

He wasn't allowed shoes. So he started to refuse the food passed through the slot. After two years and several hunger strikes, a provincial judge finally heard his request for better conditions in the autumn of 2003. The judge discovered that the guards on Hassan's cell-block wore sweaters and coats while they worked there in winter. So he ordered the heating fixed and stipulated that Hassan be allowed a pair of sneakers. With a big smile, Hassan holds up the cheap Chinese shoes in triumph. "It cost Canadian taxpayers maybe $150,000. That was the cost of five days of court, of armed guards. All this for $2 sneakers," he says. "This is too sad. Why?"

Why indeed is Hassan in solitary confinement in a Canadian prison? He laughs again. "The government thinks I am a terrorist, that I am a threat to national security!" Hassan has not been charged, has not even been able to learn the reasons for his detention, only the damning allegation that he is a danger to the Canadian public. Any national security evidence that the government holds against him is kept secret and neither he nor his lawyers nor the Canadian public can challenge that. The government has successfully convinced a federal judge that Hassan is a security threat, that he should be deported and, until that time, held in custody.

My interest in this issue started in January 2005, when a friend contacted me to ask if I would consider signing an open letter to the government protesting something called a security certificate. At the time, I had no idea what that was. My friend told me it was a measure by which individuals were detained without charge in Canada. With a little Internet research, I discovered that five men were being held in Canadian prisons, that they had been in custody for several years (one of them for four), and that not one had been charged with any offence. I was shocked and a little angry. Not knowing anything more about these men, I agreed to sign the letter. In my country, no one should be imprisoned without proper charges.

Hassan is a Muslim, as are all the detainees. His security certificate was issued in October 2001, only weeks after Sept. 11. Those were panicked times, amid accusations the hijackers had entered the United States from Canada. George W. Bush was aggressively telling the world that countries were either with the U.S. in its war on terror or against it. Canada, meanwhile, was scrambling to put together a coherent anti-terror policy.

Hassan Almrei was the first high-profile suspect apprehended by the Canadian government after Sept. 11. Ottawa told the media he was part of an al-Qaeda-linked forgery ring involved in assisting the movement of terrorists around the globe. He was described as a follower of Osama bin Laden. Hassan appeared in Federal Court, where intelligence officers said much of the information on which their suspicions were founded had to be kept secret for national security reasons. The judge decided that the belief that Hassan might be a danger to national security was reasonable. And that was that. No appeal. No sentence. Hassan was simply locked away in solitary confinement.

In our meetings, I learn that Hassan Almrei was born on Jan. 1, 1974, making him seven days my junior. From Syria, he is a self-avowed jihadist and fundamentalist. His father, a teacher, was a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood, which professes that Islam is the only true founding principle for Arab statehood. In Egypt, the Brotherhood was implicated in the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat. In Syria, it has for years been the target of harsh repression; membership in the Brotherhood is punishable by death. Facing persecution, Hassan's father relocated his family to Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. There, he raised his family in a devout Muslim fashion. Hassan knew the Koran by heart before he was 10.

Around 1991, when Hassan was 17, he went to Afghanistan to do, he says, humanitarian work. It was a few years after Soviet troops withdrew, like many of his generation, he had been encouraged by both the local clerics and the Saudi government to support the Muslim cause in Afghanistan against the invaders. Hassan returned to Afghanistan the next year. He eventually participated in a number of military patrols into Tajikistan to fight Russian troops stationed there. He tells me he never actually fought. "I wish I could say that I had the honour of fighting, but I did not," he says. "We never came across the enemy."

In the early '90s, Afghanistan had a myriad of competing camps, each with its own leader. Osama bin Laden was only one of those. Hassan claims to have never associated with him or his followers. But he did come to be friends with a man named Omar Ibn al-Khattab. Al-Khattab was a real jihadist, who eventually went on to Chechnya to fight the Russians, eventually being killed in 2002. But until then, even after Hassan had sought refuge in Canada, he kept in contact with al-Khattab. Again and again, Hassan makes the point that "there is no dishonour in fighting Muslim causes wherever Muslims are persecuted. Like Chechnya. Al-Khattab was a brave and honourable man. He was a good Muslim." But, Hassan adds, "I believe in fighting the enemy, in fighting



TRUDEAU speaks out against security certificates and on behalf of Almrei at an August 2005 rally in Montreal. 'In my country, no one should be imprisoned without charges.'

RYAN REMIORZ/CP



ALMREI admits he went to Afghanistan to support the Muslim cause but he says he never associated with bin Laden. Mujahedaan fighters (right) in Kandahar in 1986.

SIMON HAYTER/TORONTO STAR (CENTRE); BERND GIESEMANN/CORBIS

'CHARGE ME. IF YOU PROVE IN A TRIAL THAT I HAVE DONE ANYTHING WRONG, THROW AWAY THE KEY.'



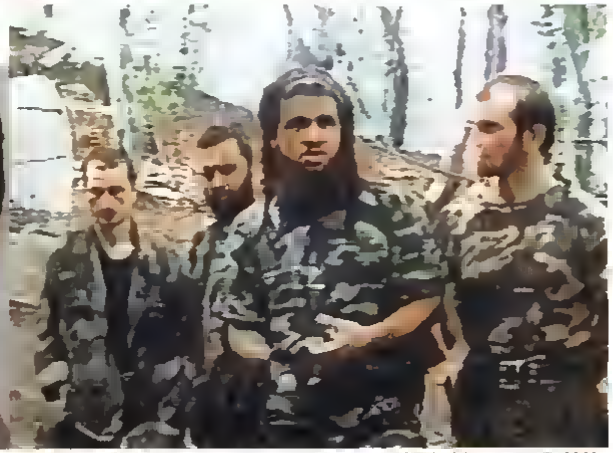
combatants, not in attacking innocent women and children or civilians. I cannot agree with bin Laden. I will not judge him. But God will."

In 1999, Hassan travelled to Canada, using a fake passport purchased from the Muslim Brotherhood. He was granted asylum as a refugee. "In Saudi Arabia, I was a second-class citizen. I was tired of living in such a corrupt and unjust place," he tells me. "I wanted to make a new life for myself in a free country." In Canada, Hassan worked at a few jobs, among them operating a pita shop in Toronto's Yorkville area.

Then, in 2001, the government-appointed translator from Hassan's refugee hearings put him in touch with another Syrian national, Nabil al Marabh. Al Marabh was looking to purchase a fake passport, with which to return to Syria to visit his ailing mother. Through his contacts, Hassan procured a fake passport in Montreal that he sold to al-Marabh. But days after Sept. 11, al-Marabh was in custody—in the United States, where the FBI claimed he was suspected of procuring fake passports for terrorists. Soon after, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service began to monitor Hassan. "I hear that the Americans are even saying Nabil got the passports for the 19 hijackers," he recalls. "For heaven's sake! I got a passport for Nabil. How did he get all those passports?"

CSIS interviewed Hassan in his lawyer's office. Out of fear, Hassan denied he was ever in Afghanistan, that he knew al-Khattab, or that he got a fake passport for al Marabh. Days later, he was arrested on a security certificate. Nabil al Marabh pleaded guilty to an immigration offence and, in 2004, was deported to Syria. By then, Hassan was in jail, labelled a threat to national security.





ALMREI'S ASSOCIATES al-Marabh (left), for whom he provided a fake passport in 2001, and jihadist al-Khattab (above, centre), whom he told CSIS he never knew, out of fear

The security certificate process has actually been around, in one form or another, since the late seventies. It has been used to expel organized crime members, spies, even a Holocaust denier. It can be used against any non-citizen the government deems a threat. More recently, the measure has been used against those suspected of being linked to terrorist organizations. One may argue, quite reasonably, that it is normal for a country to be able to refuse admission to undesirable foreign nationals before they become fully naturalized and are accorded all the rights of citizenship. Our government has a number of means to do that, from turning people down at the immigration desks in our embassies, to, most harshly, issuing security certificates against individuals who have been residing in Canada, sometimes for years.

CANADA SAYS HASSAN ALMREI CAN VOLUNTARILY AGREE AT ANY TIME TO BE RETURNED TO SYRIA

But the use of security certificates becomes more complicated—and contentious—when the individuals are refugees. In these cases, the Canadian Refugee Board has found that the person in question is in serious risk of bodily harm, persecution or other injustices in his or her country of origin, and that Canada is obliged to grant asylum. And according to the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, "Contracting states shall not expel a refugee lawfully in their territory save on grounds of national security or public order." But if national security is indeed invoked, the UN Convention Against Torture, of which Canada is also a signatory, states that "no state party shall expel, return or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture." So, in principle, Hassan cannot be sent back to Syria if he would be at substantial risk of torture there.

Syria has already allegedly tortured Canadian citizens, like Maher Arar. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have determined that it is a country that sanctions the use of torture, especially in the case of Islamic fundamentalists. A Canadian judge would therefore be hard-pressed to concede there isn't substantial risk of torture for Hassan Almrei in Syria. But this puts Ottawa in a bind: deemed a security risk, Hassan must be detained, even though the courts will likely never allow him to be deported. So will Canada need to jail him indefinitely?

The Canadian government maintains that Hassan can at any time voluntarily agree to be returned to Syria or another country that will accept him. If one were inclined to see Machiavellian intent in the workings of our officials, Hassan's treatment at Toronto West might be seen as a way to wear him down and accept deportation. But in Federal Court, the government has also argued that even if there is risk of torture, the potential danger posed by the detainees to the Canadian public outweighs that concern. In other words, the all-powerful worries about national security would allow the government

presence

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BOSTON POLICE AP (LEFT); TAP *SS

to arbitrarily send detainees back

The courts haven't yet granted permission to Ottawa to do so. But while Hassan and the other detainees remain in jail, the hearings continue. Moreover, the position of the Supreme Court of Canada, articulated only months after Sept. 11 in a ruling involving deportation proceedings against an alleged Tamil Tiger fundraiser, is not very reassuring to the detainees. The court decided that under "exceptional circumstances," individuals could be deported to places where there is risk of torture.

This ruling, and the various implications of security certificates, have already garnered attention from the UN, which sent a human rights working group here last year. In a press conference at the end of the visit, one of the UN officers disparagingly declared that "if Canada cannot find a way to better protect human rights, who will?" Louise Arbour was a Supreme Court justice at the time of the high court ruling, but as the UN high commissioner for human rights, she has come out criticizing Canada's apparent willingness to allow people to be returned to places where torture is common.



A PRISON chat between Trudeau and Almrei, and Charkaoui (right), who was released into the care of his family last February against strong arguments from the government

'I FEEL ASHAMED THAT MY COUNTRY IS TREATING YOU THIS WAY, WHOEVER YOU ARE'

Hassan Almrei, meanwhile, remains in limbo. In April, he and three other detainees were moved from provincial detention centres to a new federal facility near Kingston, Ont. Perhaps the province was beginning to resent having to bear responsibility for these men in a federal matter. Perhaps the frequent hunger strikes and protests were becoming more and more bothersome. In any case, the provincial facilities are not intended for such long stays. One detainee, Mohamed Mahjoub, has been held for nearly six years now.

The detainees have been periodically asking for bail, mostly in vain. But in February 2005, against strong government arguments to the contrary, a Federal Court judge in Montreal allowed for Adil Charkaoui, detained on a certificate since 2003, to be released into a kind of house arrest in which his own family effectively became his jailers. Two weeks ago, another Federal Court judge ordered that Mohamed Harkat, detained since December 2002, could be released under even stricter conditions, including 24-hour-a day surveillance by his wife and mother-in-law. (The federal government is appealing the decision.) But whether held in prisons or at home, each detainee states, almost as a mantra: "Please charge me." As Hassan says, "If you can prove in a fair and open trial that I have done anything wrong, lock me up and throw away the key. And I will ask no one to shed a tear for me."

These men have not been found guilty of any crime, which, in Canada, means that they are innocent. But in spite of Canadian laws and principles, innocent men are being treated like criminals. Their wives and families are being made jailers. Next week, the Supreme Court will begin to ponder the security certificates. I am one Canadian who won't wait for their judgment to say that security certificates are just plain wrong. They should be abolished, and these men should be tried in criminal court. If they cannot be tried there for lack of evidence, they should go free. If the government still thinks these men are dangerous, it should put them under surveillance and make a case against them.

If the security certificates aren't abolished outright, at the very least the process can be improved. Defence lawyers should be allowed access to the secret evidence, and given a chance to question it before a judge. It is simply perverse that government lawyers and federal judges decide the fate of individuals without due process. How is a federal court judge alone, and off the record, supposed to properly question the murky information brought before him by the Canadian security establishment? The security certificate process could also be brought before the Security Intelligence Review Committee instead of the Federal Court. The SIRC may be in need of some overhaul, but at least it has a modicum of staff and expertise to properly question and challenge information brought forward by the security establishment.

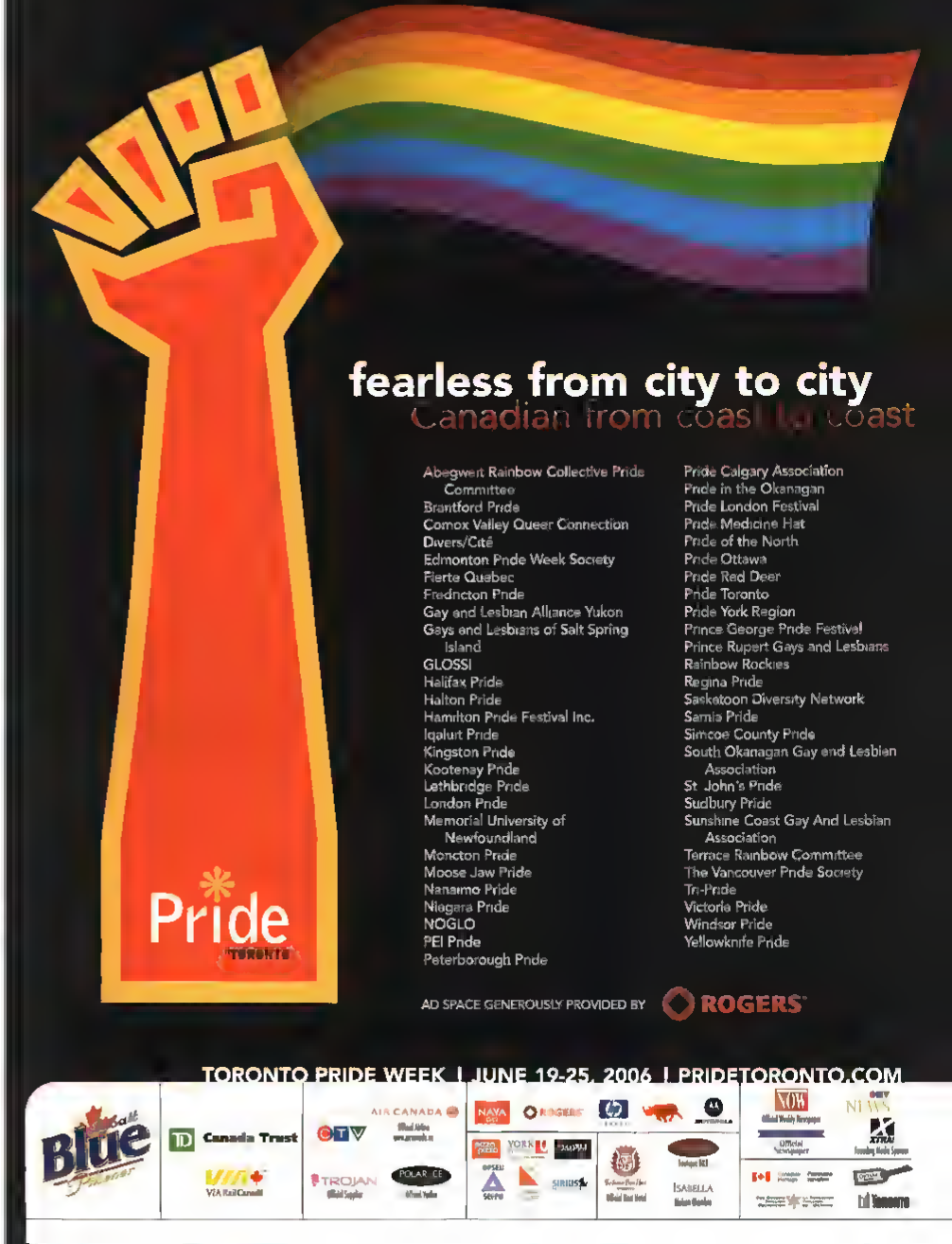
Whatever happens, security certificates as they now exist are shameful to Canada.

The last time I visited Hassan, he was still at Toronto West. His latest request for bail had been denied. He was beginning to be worn down and we didn't laugh as much, but he thanked me for taking on his cause. Once more, I needed to tell him, as I had a few times before, "Hassan, I like you. But I am not speaking out against security certificates because I like you. I do not know or care if you are a terrorist. It is not for me to judge you. I am opposed to them because I feel ashamed that my country is treating you this way, whoever you are. I expect more from my country."

No one who has ever set foot on Canadian soil should have to face torture. And no one should ever be deprived of their freedom, especially not so coarsely, without knowing why it has been taken away from them. That's all. M

Secure Freedom, *Alexandre Trudeau's documentary film on Hassan Almrei and national security certificates, airs on CTV on Sunday, June 11 at 7 p.m. EST*

COURTESY ALEXANDRE TRUDEAU (LEFT); PAUL CHIASSON/CP





REPORTERS COMPLAIN about Harper, but have to come running when he wants to talk

ONE BIG UNHAPPY FAMILY

In the new Ottawa, Harper is the head of the clan, and the press his squabbling stepkids

BY SHANDA DEZIEL • If the Prime Minister of Canada and the Ottawa press gallery were members of a family, says Luann Linquist, a California-based, *Oprah*-approved therapist, "then the press are the kids and the PM's a new father, like a stepfather. And what he sees is a bunch of bad kids. He's saying, 'I'm going to straighten you up. You have to obey these rules before you can have the responsibility. And until then, you ain't get tung nothing.' "

That's an outsider's analysis of the nasty battle under way between Stephen Harper and the media on Parliament Hill. It came to a head over a list the Prime Minister wanted reporters to sign in order to be able to ask questions at press conferences—which the press felt could be used to play favourites and silence tough questioners. Their boycott of the list and of a subsequent Harper announcement led the PM to say he was no longer talking to the Ottawa media, preferring to communicate with regional reporters.

But most Ottawa journalists say the list is just one of their concerns. They claim it's only one of the controlling tactics being used in the Prime Minister's Office's major overhaul of the way it communicates with the media. They point to the fact that they no longer have access to ministers after cabinet meetings ("Some we haven't seen for weeks," says Hélène Buzzetti of *Le Devoir*. "We call Gordon O'Connor the ghost minister. There's Afghanistan stories and we don't have the defence minister on record.") They complain that they were given 15 minutes to digest an important 250-plus-page document—the accountability act—before the PM took queries on it, "making it very difficult to ask intelligent questions," according to the *Globe and Mail*'s Brian Laghi. They protest that they're given extremely short notice of the PM's travel schedule and have to scramble to get reporters to where he's going, and that if they happen to miss something, Harper's communications people don't provide transcripts or confirmation of what was said. Buzzetti was looking for a recap of a statement Harper had made about Iran while in London, Ont. "I had to put in my story, 'I don't know what the PM said about this,' " she says.

The Prime Minister's Office didn't return calls for this story. But it appears from what Harper has said before that he believes there's an anti-Conservative bias in the press gallery and that he blames the press in part for the breakdown of his 2004 election campaign. The PM's view seems to be that there needs to be more organization at press conferences, hence the list; and he'll continue to get out his message, just not in the way that's most familiar or comfortable to reporters.

In the meantime, life is a little different when the Prime Minister and the press come together outside Question Period. Last week, Harper walked downstairs most days with backbencher Sylvie Boucher, who appears to be the minister in charge of pretending to be in a deep discussion with the PM so he doesn't have to acknowledge the cameras. He neither scrums nor takes questions, even on big news days. And when he leaves the building he goes out the freight exit instead of the front door, making for ugly pictures with dumpsters in the background. Not in 30 years have photographers had so little to work with. Trudeau, Mulroney, Chrétien and Martin all mugged in some way, but not Harper. With each day, more love is lost between the two parties, and cameramen, photographers and journalists have started to snicker about Harper while waiting to discover his comings and goings.

"Is he being a too-strict father or is he giving tough love?" wonders Linquist. "If he's pulling all the reins really tight," she says, "then we must ask, for fear of what? Come on, what do you have to be afraid of?" While she isn't an astrologer, Linquist sometimes likes to refer to the pop astrology tome *The Secret Language of Birthdays* for its amusing insights. People born on Harper's birthday, April 30, she reads aloud, are "dominating personalities but also have a desire to give up positions of responsibility. In discharging professional responsibilities they live by the book, not easily granting exceptions or specializing in shows of human understanding." Another line she finds advises those born on this day: "Ego massage is a pleasant pastime, but hardly the most rewarding."

WERE LAST WEEK'S INTERVIEWS A SIGN HE'S BACKING DOWN? OR JUST A WAY TO INCITE JEALOUSY?

On the other hand, Linquist suggests the press may actually need restrictions and must learn to accept the rules of the new head of the household. What will be interesting, she says, "is if Harper gives the same treatment to everybody or if he only slaps the hand of Cinderella. Then she has to go back and do grunt work while the others are rewarded and prance around with their goodies."

That may be what happened last week. After saying he wasn't talking to Ottawa press, Harper gave one-on-one interviews to Hill journalists from the *Globe and Mail* and CTV. Was he backing down or playing favourites to cause jealousy and infighting among the kids? In fact, it was a strategy to make stubborn journalists look foolish. After all, reporters publicly complain about him but come running when he wants to talk. "I knew we were in the middle of this thing," explains the *Globe*'s Laghi, who interviewed Harper, "and I guess I felt a tad awkward. But ultimately when a prime minister calls and asks if you want to sit down and talk, I think it's my responsibility to say yes." For the most part, Laghi's colleagues agree, saying they would have done the same thing. "The minute I started watching it," says Gerry Nott of CanWest, "I sent an email to the communications people saying, 'I assume we're next.' "

What does Linquist make of the press's response? "These kids are really starving," she says. "They're being neglected, pushed out on the street, as dad is saying, 'Go someplace else, I'll only give you a few crumbs.' "

But Peter Donolo, head of communications for Jean Chrétien from 1993 to 1999, disagrees with Linquist's view of the power dynamic. "Picking a fight with the press gallery," he says, "is like picking a fight with your mother-in-law. She's got a million ways to get back at you and it's a long-term relationship." Invoking a different metaphor altogether, he argues that in Harper's bid to gain what Donolo calls "uber control," he is falling into a predictable pattern. "When it comes to a communications strategy," says Donolo, who's now with the Strategic Counsel polling firm, "new governments are like teenagers and sex. They think they discovered it for the first time."

The press is yet to become outright vindictive, but they're starting to get antsy. "Any PR class will tell you," says *Le Devoir*'s Buzzetti, "you've got to feed the beast." Harper obviously thinks he doesn't need to follow that unwritten rule. One member of the Commons staff who's sat through many a scrum rolls his eyes at what the PM's been doing. He says he was impressed on the day that journalists boycotted one of Harper's press conferences. "In my opinion, it was nice to see." But he doesn't know how long the reporters' resolve will last.

So far, the members of the press gallery and their respective bosses are still trying to make inroads with the PMO, sending letters and requesting meetings—but Harper's staff is putting them off. "Right now, he's riding high," says Donolo, "in his honeymoon. But that doesn't last forever. There will be a time when he wants the benefit of the doubt from the media and they won't give it to him." That may be true, but Linquist knows just what this controlling father will say when things don't go his way. "See, I told you they were rotten kids." M

CHARLOTTETOWN GUARDIAN

PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN HAYWARD

ROUTE 81 IS CLOSED

Police in P.E.I. shut down a store that sold Hells Angels kitsch

BY NICHOLAS RÖHLER • When the RCMP in sleepy Charlottetown conducted a series of drug raids last month, one casualty was the local Route 81 franchise. The store, one of a handful of outlets across Canada that stock a kitsch line of Hells Angels merchandise—from T-shirts to belt buckles—had never been very welcoming. Signs outside read "Private property" or "Beware of dog." Advised another: "There is nothing in here worth losing your life over." Nor had it been frequently open, not during regular hours, anyway. On May 25, just over a year after its founding—and 1½ years after Route 81's arrival in Canada—police made that permanent, shutting the store down and reportedly seizing its merchandise. "What I can tell you is that any assets from this business, we believe are proceeds of crime," RCMP Sgt. Dave Thibeau told one local reporter.

The move, which other Route 81 owners in the Maritimes and Ontario are no doubt watching closely, follows a period of stunning expansion by the Angels, who, despite troubles in Quebec, have seen 16 new chapters open in Ontario since 2000. Next month, in Windsor, the gang's Ontario branch will celebrate its fifth anniversary. "It's going to be a big party," says Guy Ouellette, a former head of biker intelligence for the Sûreté du Québec.

As the gang's retail arm, Route 81's role in that expansion is unclear. Donny Petersen, the Angels' normally garrulous spokesman, did not respond to repeated requests for an interview. Police, too, are loath to discuss the gang's business interests, though they have said in the past that dollars spent at Route 81 stores support organized crime. And the Angels brand, which the club argues is one of the most recognized in the world, does sell. Ouellette recalls a raid in Montreal five years ago that uncovered a $100,000 Internet retail business.

But beyond the fact that 8 and 1 correspond numerically to H and A in the alphabet, Route 81's exact relationship with the Angels is something of an unknown. "It's not a business association whatsoever—none of this money goes to Hells Angels," maintains Mike Holliday, a co-owner of Route 81 Ottawa. But Holliday, whose partner is an Angel, allows that "Most of the stores are owned by members or associates or family. Not just anybody can open one. You have to be approved and you have to know somebody." Holliday, who says Route 81 Ottawa manufactures its own merchandise, is evasive about who grants that approval. "If you want to talk to those guys, phone the Route 81 in Toronto." Those calls, too, went unreturned.



THE STORES' role in the gang's expansion is unclear

Ouellette, for his part, argues that the relationship is unimportant. Though other observers worry the stores provide the Angels with a money laundering mechanism, he believes they are merely the gang's public face, a networking and PR tool. Here too, Holliday disagrees. "There's a lot of people out there who do want to buy this stuff," he says. "That's the only reason we're selling it." M

FOR THE RECORD

BREAKING THE BIG PIGGY BANK FOR VOLPE

"Joe Volpe's deep commitment to integrity inspired me to support his campaign! I borrowed $5,400 from my parents in a manner compliant with all campaign finance regulations as they then existed."—Ann Lee, age 4, Calgary."—Mock testimonial on a website that ribbed the Liberal leadership hopeful when it was found that five children had apparently donated $27,000 to his campaign.



A MOST UNLIKELY PRISONER IN A BRUTAL PLACE

He's a quiet scholar and Canadian citizen, imprisoned in Iran without charge. Ottawa has been powerless to help him.

BY LUIZA CH. SAVAGE

Last summer, while Iran was in the grip of the election campaign that would bring the authoritarian populist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power—and set the country on a collision course with the West over his nuclear ambitions—Harvard professor Michael Ignatieff found himself in Tehran, talking to university students about such lofty matters as whether one can prove that human rights are universal. He was there at the invitation of a dapper, intellectually intense 46-year-old philosopher named Ramin Jahanbegloo, who had studied at the Sorbonne and Harvard, taught at the University of Toronto, and written some 15 books in three languages.

HE IS PROBABLY BEING INTERROGATED TO COERCE A CONFESSION

Jahanbegloo, a Canadian citizen, was now back in his homeland, to foster what he earnestly called a "dialogue of civilizations."

Outside of the state-controlled universities, Jahanbegloo—whose name in one dialect translates as "son of the world"—had turned a small office in an arts and culture NGO into something of an international salon. Through force of will and a gregarious personality, he persuaded some of the world's most famous intellectuals to travel to Tehran, where they were treated like rock stars. Crowds of 1,500 people gathering to listen to German Jürgen Habermas discuss "post-ideological thinking," or Stanford philosopher Richard Rorty talk about "democracy and non-foundationalism." While such encounters are taken for granted on Western campuses, in theocratic Iran they took a measure of courage—though it is only now becoming clear just exactly how much.

It has been less than a year since Ahmadinejad replaced the reform-minded Mohammad Khatami as president, but a political era has passed. Ignatieff is now running for the leadership of the Liberal party, and Jahanbegloo, who was until recently "dialoguing" with foreign presidents and the Dalai Lama, is in jail. He was arrested at Tehran airport on April 27, between a sojourn in India and a trip to a conference in Brussels, and locked up in Tehran's notorious Evin prison, where detainees are routinely subject to torture and abuse. Formal charges have not been laid, but Iran's minister of intelligence said Jahanbegloo was picked up because of "relations with foreigners." Government-aligned newspapers accuse him of being a foreign agent conspiring against the government.

His friends, and they number in the hundreds around the world, are shocked that the regime could target their Ramin—a man so passive in his methods that a critic once dismissed him as "all talk and no action." "Ramin was not a political activist, an organizer, someone to get caught up in causes," says his longtime friend, Nader Hashemi, a post-doctoral fellow in political science at Northwestern University in Illinois, who got to know him while studying in Toronto. "That's something he was critical of."

A letter to Ahmadinejad calling for the philosopher's release has been signed by more than 420 thinkers from Antwerp and Austin to Malaysia and Serbia, including Habermas, Umberto Eco, Timothy Garton Ash, Noam Chomsky, Leszek Kolakowski, Antonio Negri and others. Danny Postel, a Chicago-based journalist and critic who is organizing the petition, admits that given the unpredictability of the regime, he can't be sure it won't do more harm than good. "The authorities could say, 'Look at all the Western intellectuals who are behind Ramin. This proves our point.' We hope it has the opposite effect of putting pressure on the regime. But one simply doesn't know," insists Ignatieff. "This man had no connection to any anti-regime activities of any kind. It would be an international disgrace if they harmed him."

A disgrace, yes, but not the first one. Jahanbegloo is the second Canadian citizen to be thrown into the brutal Evin prison, at risk for his life. And it's the second time Canada seems powerless to do anything about it. He sits in the same prison where Zahra Kazemi, the Iranian-Canadian photojournalist arrested for taking pictures during a demonstration, was raped and tortured. She died of her injuries. Jahanbegloo's friends worry that he could face a similar fate.

Ottawa's campaign to have him either formally charged or released has consisted mainly of stern letters from Foreign Minister Peter MacKay to the Iranian minister of foreign affairs, and futile entreaties. A letter co-signed by the EU, which has greater diplomatic and economic ties to Tehran, protested the lack of due process, the fact that no charges have been laid, and that he has not been granted a lawyer. But it has made no difference. Canada has not been allowed consular visits. "Iran does not recognize joint citizenship, so they're not in any way acknowledging his Canadian citizenship or connection," MacKay said. "In fact, by some bizarre assessment, having Canadian or American or any other foreign connection is feeding perhaps the reasons for his detention."

The Iranian chargé d'affaires in Ottawa has met with Canadian officials, while Canada's ambassador in Tehran has met Iranian officials, but there have been no public threats to recall our ambassador, as Canada did at least three times over the Kazemi affair, and no public upbraiding of the regime over the case. It's a delicate area because every step must be weighed for its consequences on a man's life. MacKay and his officials have taken pains not to issue statements that might be interpreted as putting pressure on the unpredictable Iranian regime.

But some critics say Canada should be doing more, not just for Jahanbegloo but to hold Iran to account for human rights abuses, and to encourage democracy there. "If the Bush administration monopolizes this issue on the international stage, it's the kiss of death for civil society in Iran," says Payam Akhavan, an associate professor of international law at McGill University, and a former adviser to the UN war crimes prosecution at The Hague. "We take notice because [Jahanbegloo and Kazemi] are people with a connection to Canada, but there are so many people like them who suffer in silence because they don't have a foreign nationality. Canada should be engaged in promoting civil rights in Iran irrespective of whether a Canadian is languishing in prison. The case has to be raised at the highest levels. It needs to become an international issue."



MONTREAL-based photographer Zahra Kazemi was murdered in 2003, under Khatami's regime.

Reliable news on Jahanbegloo's condition is difficult to come by. His wife, with whom he has an infant daughter, is thought to be the only one who has seen him, and she has declined to speak to reporters out of fear of making things worse. She is also said to be wary

(OPPOSITE) NEWSHA TAVAKOLIAN/POLARIS/KLIX.PIX (THIS PAGE, LEFT) VAHID SALEMI/AP; CP

of involvement by foreign governments.

If his treatment follows the typical pattern of other dissidents, he is likely being held in solitary confinement in a small cell with the lights continually on, in an effort to disorient him and deprive him of his sense of time, says Akhavan, who is also president of the New Haven, Conn.-based Iran Human Rights Documentation Center. "He is probably being interrogated to coerce a confession through sheer exhaustion or psychological breakdown," he says. Jahanbegloo could be there a long time. "If he doesn't confess, they will continue to detain him. If he does confess, they cannot release him because their accusations would lack credibility," Akhavan says.

There are multiple layers of irony to his arrest, not the least of which is that Jahanbegloo was a patriotic Iranian who turned down the chance at an academic career in the best Western universities to live in a middle-class apartment and contribute to the cultural life in his country. "I encouraged him and so did others," says Hashemi. "We said that he was more needed in Iran than anywhere else." Says Ignatieff: "He could be living a comfortable life in Toronto—that makes me angriest. This man is a patriotic Iranian and has every right to live and teach in Iran."

Moreover, to hear his friends and colleagues tell it, the idea of him plotting to overthrow



PETER MacKay and Michael Ignatieff: 'Stand up and speak out'

the regime is as likely as seeing Mahatma Gandhi get into a barroom brawl. Jahanbegloo was raised in a family of intellectuals in Tehran, his father was an economics professor and his mother hosted salons for writers and artists. He did his Ph.D. dissertation at the Sorbonne on the non-violence philosophy of Gandhi. He studied the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as well. "The key feature of his thinking is non-violence and dialogue," explains Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, professor of history and Near and Middle Eastern civilizations at the University of Toronto.

Jahanbegloo first moved to North America to study and teach at U of T from 1997 to 2001. Hamid Marjaee, a friend and community volunteer in Toronto, remembers his dedication to his work. Except for early morning swims and strolls around the city, he spent his time working. "He liked Canada. He was very happy here, with the non-intrusiveness," says Marjaee. After a stint in Washington, Jahanbegloo headed back to Iran in 2002.

In a lengthy series of interviews in January and February with Danny Postel, to be published in the online journal, *Logos*, Jahanbegloo explained: "I consider myself a politically moderate and non-violent person, but a philosophically radical-minded person. Philosophy is the daily practice of dissent at the level of thought. Being a true radical is having the courage to think and to judge independently." His contacts with foreigners were part of a philosophical, rather than a political, project. "For those of us who live and work in Iran, every visit of a prominent intellectual figure is fresh air which gives us the necessary oxygen to continue thinking differently," he told Postel.

Jahanbegloo comes from a generation of Iranian thinkers disillusioned by revolutionary politics and political violence, and rejects utopian ideologies like Marxism as well as religious dogma. Instead, the way forward is through tolerance, "dialogue" with other cultures, and efforts to understand them, though not to ape them. "The new Iranian intellectual is no longer entitled to play the role of a prophet or a hero," he told Postel. "He/she is in the Iranian public space to demystify ideological fanaticisms and not to preach them."

It is no coincidence that one of his best-known books, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, published some 14 years ago, focused on a thinker Ignatieff describes as a "pragmatic" liberal. At one point in the book, Berlin tells Jahanbegloo, "Total liberty can be dreadful, total equality can be equally frightful." Here was a Persian entering into conversation with a Latvian-born Jew and Oxford don. "That's what it means to think freely," says Ignatieff, who has written an authorized biography of Berlin. "It means you don't decide you like a thinker based on his religion or ethnicity—you find him interesting based on what he says, and that is Ramin's view."

Another irony of his arrest as a foreign agent is that, despite his immersion in Western philosophy, he was opposed to importing Western ideas wholesale into Iran. On the contrary, he told Postel, "We have to look for a universalism which is founded on all human experiences of history rather than only on Western values." Says Postel, a senior editor at *openDemocracy.net*, a British-based online magazine: "I think of Ramin as a philosophical ambassador between Iran and the outside world—and not just the West. He is engaged in a profound dialogue with India." While in prison, he will miss the publication of his latest book, a collection of conversations with Indian thinker Ashis Nandy.

At U of T, Jahanbegloo founded an Iranian discussion group that met each Saturday and called itself the Agora, after the ancient Athenian forum. "Agora initially created a lot of problems in Toronto," recalls Tavakoli-Targhi, "because it brought people from the far right and far left and they were debating. They had been so polarized. Islamist, monarchist, or leftist, and he sort of messed this up. He came and brought people of different ideologies together."

There are a variety of theories as to why this moderate man of letters was targeted. For one thing, his detention is part of a broader crackdown. Student leaders and prominent writers have been arrested in past months. Human Rights Watch reported that "freedom of expression and opinion deteriorated considerably" last year, while Amnesty International pointed out the arrests of journalists, online bloggers and human rights defenders. Last month, the government even closed a state-run newspaper "due to its publication of divisive and provocative materials."

Secular intellectuals were tolerated under Khatami, who encouraged at least a rhetorical "dialogue of civilizations" as cultural policy. But Ahmadinejad is interested only in a "dialogue of religions." "This administration wants to roll back the democratic gains that were achieved in the last presidency," says Hashemi. "One way of doing that is to target someone like Ramin as an example of the type of people they don't want."

"He lived in this kind of bubble that the regime allowed for free thought in Tehran," Ignatieff notes. "Now it's not simply that they have arrested a free mind, but they have also deliberately decided to puncture the bubble for free thought. It's not just Ramin, it's all these people. In silencing him, they decided to silence all other free spirits in Iran with trumped-up charges of espionage." Another theory is that Jahanbegloo was simply becoming too popular among young Iranians, who make up 70 per cent of Iran's population.



IRANIAN President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shows no signs of respecting Canada's diplomatic requests

ADEK BERRY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

'IN SILENCING HIM, THEY DECIDED TO SILENCE ALL OTHER FREE SPIRITS IN IRAN'

Some accounts have linked his arrest to two articles he published in Spain's *El País* newspaper. In January, a little more than a month after Ahmadinejad famously denounced the Holocaust as "myth," Jahanbegloo wrote emotionally about his 2004 visit to Auschwitz, calling it "one of the most terrible experiences that anyone can experience." In a second article, which ran on April 20, Jahanbegloo outlined the current intellectual debates in modern Iran, stating that it is one of the few Muslim countries with an active civil society, which he compared to those in Poland and Czechoslovakia under the Communist regime. He described two groups of religious intellectuals—reformists who aim to reconcile Islamic thought with democracy, civil society and religious pluralism, and oppose the absolute supremacy of clerics; and neo-conservatives who believe in the supremacy of the clerics, are against Western ideas, and oppose the separation of church and state. Jahanbegloo placed himself among a third new generation of thinkers who do not follow a specific ideology, but are in favour of exchange with other cultures and a dialogue with the West and with modernity, thus posing a threat to the philosophical and intellectual principles of the established order.

Some see Jahanbegloo as a pawn in the escalating confrontation between Iran and the U.S., which earlier this year announced it would spend US$75 million to promote democracy in Iran. Some of that money is slated to flow to radio and TV broadcasts to promote opposition to Iran's religious leaders. But some will flow to non-governmental organizations and institutions such as the National Endowment for Democracy, an organization based in Washington that receives some funding from the U.S. Congress.

Jahanbegloo won a fellowship from the endowment to cover a year's living expenses in the U.S. capital, where he worked on a book that dealt with balancing the traditions of Persian civilization with the demands of the modern world. Now, his connection to the endowment could be held against him. But the notion that by receiving a fellowship he was somehow on Washington's payroll is "bogus," says Hashemi, "because the U.S. government gives money to many academic institutions, and a lot of people indirectly benefit from U.S. largesse. In that sense, many top-ranking Iranian officials who studied at U.S. universities could be accused of the same things."

Nonetheless, some blame the Bush administration for pursuing a program that is backfiring. "I think he is a victim of the kind of policy the U.S. has been pursuing of openly declaring they are giving $75 million to the opposition to overthrow the regime. So the regime has been looking for people to scapegoat. It seems they have picked Ramin as a way of making a case," says Tavakoli-Targhi.

But others say that if other countries stood firm, such a policy would not be branded as a purely U.S. project. "You can fault the Americans, but where are the Europeans and the Canadians in making a more serious commitment?" asks Akhavan. "It is equally the fault of Canada and the Europeans that they are not playing a more prominent role on the issue."

Hashemi fears there is little Canada can do to help Jahanbegloo. "Unfortunately, Canada's relations with Iran are at an all-time low. The leverage that Canada has over Iran is not extensive. The only thing Canada can do is keep raising the human rights profile and condition of Iran in international forums and not allow Iran to close the case on Jahanbegloo or Kazemi."

The Kazemi case was a flashpoint in Iranian-Canadian relations. After Iran admitted she died as a result of being beaten in 2003, and an intelligence officer was charged, Canada was forbidden to have representatives at much of the trial. Our ambassador was twice recalled in protest. The intelligence agent was acquitted in July 2004, and the story exploded again in March 2005, when an Iranian physician who had examined Kazemi fled to Canada as a refugee and recounted how he had seen signs of horrific torture and rape. More recently, a story in the *National Post* suggesting a new Iranian dress code would force non-Muslims, including Jews, to wear identifying badges caused an uproar, and led to our ambassador being summoned to Iran's foreign ministry. (The *Post* later admitted the story was wrong.)

Despite the strained relations, former Hague adviser Akhavan says it is time for Canada to get more serious about pushing Iran to respect human rights, by taking concrete steps such as using international law to indict members of the regime. "Canada should exercise leadership in leading a coalition to push for individual accountability against Iranian leaders who are responsible for crimes against humanity, such as widespread executions, torture, persecution on political or religious grounds," he says. As well, Canada could look for regime-related assets to freeze.

At stake is ensuring that the issue of promoting a civil society in Iran "doesn't simply become a stand-off between the U.S. and Iran, but becomes part of a broader sustained commitment on the part of the international community," Akhavan says. In that, he adds, Canada must be strongly engaged. Foreign Affairs declined to comment on what steps, if any, are now being considered. But, says Ignatieff: "It's time for everyone who loves freedom of thought to stand up and speak out on Jahanbegloo's behalf." M

(LEFT) FRED CHARTRAND/CP; GEOFF ROBINS/REUTERS

The thorns in the Rose Revolution

Abuses of power may be threatening Georgia's democratic reforms

BY MICHAEL PETROU • It was the democratic revolution that inspired people living under autocratic regimes around the world. In November 2003, Georgian opposition politician Mikheil Saakashvili and his supporters, all carrying roses, successfully seized the parliament buildings and forced the resignation of president Eduard Shevardnadze, the former foreign minister of the old Soviet Union who was clinging to power after rigged parliamentary elections. More than 100,000 Georgians took to the streets to celebrate, and Saakashvili was elected president in free and fair elections six weeks later.

Over the next two years, similar democratic movements—some successful, some not—erupted around the world. During Ukraine's Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko held a rose aloft while greeting his supporters, some of whom waved Georgian flags, and close ties still exist between pro-democracy youth groups in Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus and elsewhere. "Before there was a Purple Revolution in Iraq, or an Orange Revolution in Ukraine, or a Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, there was the Rose Revolution in Georgia," U.S. President George W. Bush said when he visited Tbilisi last year. Bush was praising his hosts and allies, but what he said was also accurate: the Rose Revolution was a watershed moment.

Television news anchor Irakli Imnaishvili watched it all unfold. A serious and slightly laconic young man of 28, Imnaishvili was too professional to get swept up in the euphoria of the event. He reported the news as objectively as he could, but inside he was pleased with what he was witnessing. "I thought this is a great opportunity for Georgians to change everything and start building our country," he told *Maclean's*.

Last summer, a much smaller street protest flared up in Tbilisi, following a controversial court decision. Riot police broke it up, using excessive force, according to some observers. Imnaishvili reported on these events, too. But then his show was cancelled, after government officials complained about his critical coverage, he says. The cancellation generated a lot of publicity, and Imnaishvili was later invited to appear on a talk show to discuss press freedom in Georgia. The other guest, a regional governor named Akaki Bobokhidze, took issue with Imnaishvili's comments and stormed off the set. He was waiting for Imnaishvili in the corridor, with his driver and bodyguard. The two allegedly held Imnaishvili while Bobokhidze beat the journalist, breaking his nose and spilling blood all over the television studio's carpets. Bobokhidze claims he was defending his family's honour.



SOME GEORGIANS are taking to the streets to protest against the president (on poster)

Imnaishvili's case is not an isolated event. Other critical journalists have been beaten by police, or are subjected to less overt pressure to amend their coverage. Human rights groups have complained about government pressure on the judiciary. Even the U.S. State Department criticizes Georgia for its lack of judicial independence, government pressure on the media, arbitrary arrests, corruption in law enforcement, and the torture and abuse of detainees—although it also notes that the government is taking steps to stop these offences.

> 'WE WANT NORMAL LIVES—THAT IS WHY WE SUPPORTED SAAKASHVILI. THERE HAS BEEN DISAPPOINTMENT.'

Saakashvili's defenders say that after decades of Soviet rule and post-Soviet autocracy, drastic measures are needed to weed out the corruption and organized crime that still permeate Georgian society. Bidzina Bregadze, a member of parliament for the governing National Movement party, has likened the mafia in Georgia to that of Don Corleone, the Italian crime boss in Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* films. Sergi Kapanadze, an assistant professor at Tbilisi State University, thinks they are worse. "You have very strong organized crime in Georgia, incomparable to what it was in eastern Europe," he said. "There are certain methods—and I absolutely believe that the human rights and other rights of the prisoners should be respected—but there are certain instances when you have exceeded your powers a little bit."

There is no question that organized crime is endemic in Georgia. Some Georgians might even favour a heavy hand to deal with it. Only seven years ago, Georgian intellectual Zaal Kikodze told the American journalist Robert Kaplan that Western educated reformers such as Mikheil Saakashvili could never be heroes to Georgians because they had never killed anyone, didn't drink two litres of wine a night, and carried no daggers.

Kikodze was wrong about Saakashvili. He was a hero for a moment, and he is still popular with many Georgians, as was made evident by the electoral success of his party in recent by-elections. But more of his countrymen are beginning to voice their opposition. They supported Saakashvili during the Rose Revolution but are not willing to blindly follow his government. "We see what it is like in Canada, the United States and Europe. We see they have normal lives, and we want the same. This is why we supported Saakashvili, and there has been disappointment," said Ruso Imnadze, a grandmother and retired journalist.

Imnadze admits many things have improved in Georgia since Shevardnadze was president, and certainly since Soviet times, but she is frustrated and impatient. "It is not enough. And it is not what we were waiting for after the Rose Revolution. Freedom of speech means you can say something and people will react. In Georgia, you can say anything you want, but no one in government will pay attention to you."

Roman Zvarych, a senior adviser to fellow democratic revolutionary Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine, says that the aftermath of all revolutions is about managing inflated expectations. And there can be few revolutions that brought with them higher expectations than the Rose Revolution in Georgia. So it is natural that some of Saakashvili's former supporters are now disappointed. All reforms are disruptive. It is also true that, in relative terms, Georgia is one of the freest democracies in the Near East. Given the challenges his government faces, perhaps the president should be given a bit of leeway?

Opposition politician Tina Khidasheli doesn't buy the argument. The young mother used to chair the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, a human rights watchdog organization that played a vital role in the 2003 Rose Revolution. She is now a leading member of the Republican party and a fierce critic of the current government. "That was exactly the logic behind Shevardnadze," she says. "When Shevardnadze came here the situation was 500 times worse than when Saakashvili came. We had two wars [over the secessionist movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia]. We had no state actually. We had paramilitary forces running the country. At five o'clock in the evening, you couldn't go out in the streets." Khidasheli says authoritarian methods were unacceptable under Shevardnadze, and are equally unacceptable now. "If there is no legitimacy, then there is no hero that can save the nation."

For Khidasheli, and for many other Georgians, it is not enough for their country to be more free and democratic than their neighbours in a difficult part of the world. They aspire to be part of Europe and the West. They think their government should be judged by the same standards. M

PHOTOGRAPH BY ZORAN MILICH

IRAKLI GEDENIDZE/REUTERS

Painting the town green and yellow

No one does World Cup preparations quite like the Brazilians

BY ISABEL VINCENT • Sergio Henrique de Almeida is on vacation from Teleman, Rio de Janeiro's local phone company, where he works as an administrator. But two weeks before Brazil takes on Croatia (June 13) in its first official World Cup match, he is busier than ever. "I always take holidays when Brazil is in the World Cup, but I have so much to do this time," says de Almeida as he supervises a group of street children and other workers decorating his Copacabana street in yellow, green and blue banners—the colours of the Brazilian flag—for the tournament that begins in Germany this week. The night before, de Almeida, 41, coordinated the painting of the manhole covers and concrete benches in the centre of Inhanga Street ("We didn't want to risk anyone stepping on the fresh paint during the day," he says.) He and local merchants plan to set up a giant TV screen in their square so residents can watch when the Brazilian team is playing.



RIO shuts down when the national team plays matches

Such preparations are taking place in neighbourhoods throughout the country as Brazilians prepare for an event that, for many, is much bigger than the annual Carnaval celebrations. Sales of TV sets have risen more than 30 per cent. Stores are crammed with paraphernalia. Tic Tac has issued yellow and green mints, and McDonald's has named its hamburgers after the countries taking part in the tournament. One beauty salon is offering a special on manicures and pedicures featuring designs in green and yellow.

Brazil, whose national team has won the World Cup a record five times, comes to a virtual standstill during World Cup. Last month, Rio city workers learned that during the height of the action (June 13 to 22), they would only be obliged to work half days so they can watch the matches. "If the city didn't do this, no one would come to work," says Marisa, who works in city hall's marketing department. "This town shuts down if Brazil is playing. People are glued to their televisions."

Newspapers have been publishing pullout sections on the preparations, reporting from the Brazilian training camp in Weggis, on Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. When Brazil played a warm-up match against the local club last week, there were lineups of patrons at bars where TV screens had been set up for the game (Brazil won the match, 8-0). In addition to reports of eager Brazilian fans interrupting the training sessions to swarm Ronaldinho Gaucho, there was controversy about whether star player Ronaldo is out of shape following a recent leg injury. "They're calling me fat?" said Ronaldo at a press conference. "I treat it as a joke," he said. "It's for lack of something else to say—I had a minor injury and I haven't played for 45 days. It's just ridiculous."

Even the Qatar-based Arabic-language satellite network Al-Jazeera got caught up in the Brazilian frenzy. It has posted correspondent Jabali Djamed to Switzerland to follow the team's preparations. Djamed, who works for a network more familiar with covering Middle East conflicts than Brazilian soccer stars, noted in an interview with *O Globo* newspaper that "the war that is the most interesting to the Arab world right now is that of the Brazilian team for a sixth World Cup championship in Germany. This is now the biggest news in the world." M

THE ISSUE IN...

BRAZIL: MURDER VICTIM STANDS BY THE ACCUSED

The strange part of the murder trial of Iara Marques Barcelos, who'd been accused of killing her lover, Ercy da Silva Cardoso, came when the defence provided letters endorsing Marques's character. The letters, which the judge accepted as evidence, describe her as "a good person" and were allegedly dictated from beyond the grave by the victim to a psychic medium. Whether they had any effect on the jury, which acquitted Marques, wasn't known.

IN SEARCH OF THE ENRON BILLIONS

Class action king William Lerach is now going after TD and RBC

BY COLIN CAMPBELL • William Lerach has been called the "class action king" for his long, controversial career defending aggrieved shareholders in securities fraud cases. He's both feared and reviled by many corporations in the United States. His rough tally from past cases? US$40 billion. If his name is not familiar in Canada, it may be soon. Lerach is the lead attorney in the richest class action surrounding the collapse of the energy giant, Enron Corp. Two weeks ago, a judge approved the largest litigation recovery in history in that lawsuit, a US$6.6 billion partial settlement over the role three banks, including the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, played in Enron's collapse. And Lerach is not done yet. Among the defendants that have yet to settle are two more Canadian banks that had dealings with Enron, Toronto-Dominion and Royal Bank of Canada. At stake are hundreds of millions of dollars that Lerach vows to win in coming months.

THE CANADIAN BANKS SAY THEY WERE BIT PLAYERS AND HAVE SET ASIDE HUGE LEGAL RESERVES

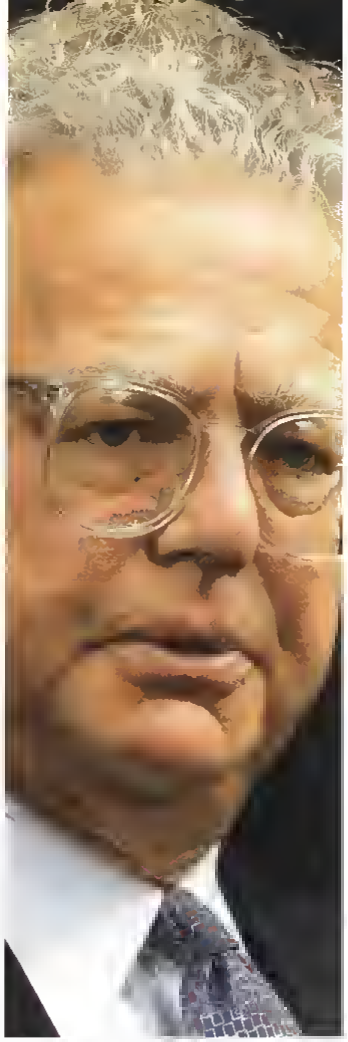
Last month's guilty verdict for Enron's founder Kenneth Lay and CEO Jeffrey Skilling closed a major chapter in the Enron saga, but also underscored the unabated lust for blood five years after the company collapsed. The furor will continue to play out in the civil courts, where the class action trial for those who don't settle is set to begin in October. It is one of the last hopes for investors to recoup more of what was lost in Enron's US$60 billion implosion (so far, in total, US$7.2 billion has been collected in Enron settlements, which will eventually be paid to claimants). TD and RBC are not unprepared. Both have already set aside huge legal reserves—US$500 million for RBC and US$300 million for TD—for the litigation. Neither the banks nor Lerach would comment on whether there have been talks recently, but with the trial date looming, more settlements among the nine remaining financial institutions seem likely.

Enron's collapse was the result of a series of sham transactions that hid debt and allowed the company to fake its financial results. Bankruptcy examiners have said the banks were partners and enablers, providing the money Enron needed to carry out the fraud. TD and RBC maintain they were bit players in the Enron saga. Indeed, their transactions with Enron were among the more straightforward. "If it hadn't been for the fact that it was Enron, they probably wouldn't have been written about," says an industry source familiar with the litigation.

But the transactions still raise important questions as to how much the banks knew of Enron's widespread accounting fraud at the time, and whether that makes them liable in Enron's demise. While RBC and TD were not among Enron's so-called "tier one" banks, their dealings with Enron were extensively documented by the company's court-appointed bankruptcy examiners. The final examiner's report dedicated almost 70 pages to TD's dealings with the company, concluding that in six transactions, the bank "aided and abetted" the Enron fraud. Similar focus was placed on RBC. Another examiner, outlining several RBC-Enron transactions with code names like Hawaii, Alberta and Cerberus, concluded that RBC also "aided and abetted certain Enron officers in breaching their fiduciary duty."

RBC is sticking to its assertions of last summer that it would "vigorously defend the remaining Enron-related cases against it." TD also said its position has not changed in recent weeks, adding that it is "adequately provisioned" for the litigation. "We should be able to resolve any claim for quite a small amount," said TD's president and CEO Ed Clark in a statement last summer. Both banks have already settled a claim against them by Enron (RBC paid the company US$25 million and TD paid US$50 million). RBC also settled a case in 2004 with Rabobank Group, which had taken over an RBC transaction with Enron worth US$517 million. That transaction is being used as evidence in the class action claim. Rabobank said it was duped by RBC, alleging the bank knew of Enron's fraudulent practices through three employees it hired that had dealt with Enron at a previous employer. The three bankers resigned from RBC shortly before Enron's collapse, and are fighting extradition from the U.K. to the U.S.

The fact that TD and RBC have delayed settling implies they don't feel there is a strong case against them, says Richard Powers, the assistant dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. The plaintiffs are likely asking for more than TD and RBC are currently prepared to pay. "It becomes a bit of a game of chicken at this point," he says, adding that such actions rarely go to trial. But Lerach is undaunted, warning with typical aplomb: "Skilling and Ley and the other Enron insiders that have been convicted of crimes or plead guilty to crimes are going to be sitting there in October as defendants in the civil trial right along with the Canadian banks if they don't settle." M



LERACH: The US$40-billion legal eagle

PAT SULLIVAN/AP

Sorkin's bad day: a farce in one act



STEVE MAICH

Fred Sorkin knows what it's like to have a bad day at the office. You miss out on a few sales, run into a bad market and miss the quarterly targets, and you're going to take a public whipping from shareholders and analysts. As founder, chairman and former CEO of software company Hummingbird Ltd., Sorkin has faced the music before and knows that with the right balance of muted contrition, calm optimism and firm self confidence, almost any crisis can be overcome. But some problems aren't so simple.

What do you do, for example, when you want to surrender and investors are insisting you fight on? It gets even tougher when analysts start calling you a chicken and shareholders suggest you sold them out to advance your own agenda. People start throwing around scary-sounding words like "fiduciary duty," and suddenly the genteel art of investor relations feels like a contact sport.

A few weeks ago, Sorkin agreed to sell Hummingbird to California-based Symphony Technology Group for US$465 million in cash, or $26.75 per share. On first blush it seemed like a reasonable move. After hitting a high of US$60 in March 2000, the stock has bounced between US$20 and US$25 a share for the past 3½ years. Even recent profit improvements failed to rally the stock, and money managers were getting restless. Symphony's offer was about 12 per cent higher than the stock had been recently trading, and Sorkin figures Hummingbird will be better off in the hands of a larger conglomerate so it can focus on nurturing the business without obsessing over profit growth every three months.

But for investors who've stuck with Hummingbird through a gruelling five year downturn, the deal came like a slap in the face, and now Sorkin is the one taking a beating. In the days following the deal, analysts scoffed at the measly 12 per cent premium and suggested Hummingbird should be worth at least US$30 a share. Sorkin found himself in the terrible position of essentially having to argue that the company he built isn't nearly as valuable as everybody thought.

But how could Sorkin know that? Hummingbird's management didn't hire an investment bank to approach potential buyers to set up an auction. That would've been too disruptive "for employees, for the company culture, for everything," Sorkin said. Instead, he signed an exclusive agreement with the partner of his choice and presented it to investors, *fait accompli*. As you might guess, money managers failed to see the genius in Sorkin's unconventional approach.

Richard Glass, a portfolio manager at Morgan Stanley Investment Management, which owns almost five per cent of the company's stock, called it a "farce." "Maybe management needs to find a new home if they don't believe this business is worth any more," he said. David Shore, an analyst with Desjardins Securities, called the sale process "unbelievable" and advised clients to vote against the deal.

For Hummingbird's long-suffering shareholders, its sale came as a slap in the face.



To understand their irritation, try this skill testing question: when you sell your house, should you (a) give it to the guy who knocks on your door and offers a decent price, just because he promises not to cut down your favourite tree? Or (b) hire an agent, put a sign on the lawn and sell to the highest bidder? (If you answered "b," a few institutional investors would like to nominate you to sit on Hummingbird's board of directors.)

Sorkin has his defences, mind you. He says independent appraisals decided the bid was fair. He also says the board would be open to an alternate offer if one comes along. But in the game of acquisitions, the company that arrives first, with the co operation of management, has a huge advantage. Hummingbird agreed to a 2.5 per cent breakup fee, which means that if somebody else does want to buy the company, they'll have to pay Symphony about US$12 million just to walk away.

Investors are naturally asking just whose interests are being served here. Sorkin has repeatedly said the Symphony deal is preferable because it will minimize disruption to the company. He expressed fear that if a competitor were to buy Hummingbird, it might scrap some of its products. This way, the company will continue on essentially as is, but if he had simply put the company up for sale, the only assurance he'd have is of the best possible price for stockholders. Of course, that's the only thing that's supposed to matter.

Shareholders might've been more inclined to give Sorkin the benefit of the doubt, except that he's shown a tin ear for investor relations before. In 2005, for example, the board saw fit to award him a special US$3.8 million bonus for more than 20 years of outstanding service. Heartwarming stuff, until you consider that Hummingbird made a cumulative profit of just US$1.84 million between '02 and '05, and the stock had been flopping around like a dying fish for years. Now, through the Symphony deal, Sorkin stands to collect another US$32.6 million in cash for his stock.

Chances are, Sorkin and Symphony will buy peace with a modestly improved offer and Bay Street will go back to sleep as it always does. Public spats tend to peter out quickly in Canada, where investors have been conditioned to meekly accept things like multiple voting shares, outrageous executive compensation, benign monopolies and other abuses of shareholder rights. But letting it go is different from forgetting, and a long, long way from forgiving.

Sorkin says that maybe one day, after the market recovers, Hummingbird will issue shares again and re emerge as a public company. Maybe. But after all this, who in their right mind would want to buy the stock? M

FRED LUM/THE GLOBE AND MAIL



ROYALS NUKE DINNER, CHEF WALKS OUT

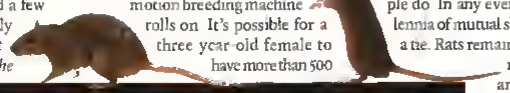
Takeshi Konde, long-serving chef to the Danish royal court, has quit in disgust, charging that the royal family prefers microwaved dinners to fine food. Konde worked the ovens at Amelienborg Palace for 24 years, but said he could no longer bear watching the royals chow down on reheated leftovers. In addition, the royal menu budget has been slashed. "Soon," griped Konde, "they will get rid of the silver and eat off monogrammed plastic plates."

Second to humans, and trying harder



The hatred we feel for rats is the respect due our toughest enemies

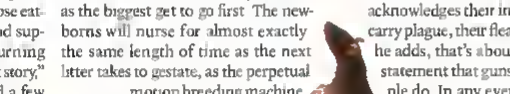
BY BRIAN BETHUNE • In the spring of 1999, journalist Jerry Langton went to gawk at Manhattan's latest celebrities, a pair of red-tailed hawks nesting in Central Park. On his first visit, the female tore a gray squirrel into bite-sized hunks for her brood, and many in the crowd watching muttered uncomfortable "nature red in tooth and claw" comments. The next day, though, when the male flew home with a rat wriggling in its talons, onlookers leapt to their feet in a loud ovation. Yes, indeed, the human hatred for rats can only be described as visceral. Small wonder, of course, given rats' record of corpse-making and corpse-eating, their ongoing assault on our food supplies, and their general stomach-turning creepiness. "Everyone has his or her rat story," remarks Langton, who has included a few personal testimonials in his appallingly informative *Rat: How the World's Most Notorious Rodent Clawed its Way to the Top*. "And everyone wants the rat they met dead, not just moved somewhere else."



Part of that reaction is the hostile respect due a worthy adversary, and natural enemies don't come any tougher than *rattus rattus* (the black rat), and its bigger, meaner cousin *rattus norvegicus* (the Norway or brown rat). Their astounding adaptability lets them eat virtually *anything*, from the stuff we want, like grain and electrical insulation, to the stuff we don't, like sewage and garbage. They live anywhere, too: rats have been found deep underground in coal mines, surviving on miners' crumbs, and thriving in meat lockers, nesting warmly inside animal carcasses.

A superb sense of taste means rats can detect poison down to 0.5 parts in a million, roughly the equivalent of two grains of salt in a pound of peanut butter. Even when they ingest poison, they can tolerate many times the dosage that would kill a cat or dog. They can collapse their rib cages and fit through holes as small as three quarters of an inch wide. They can climb like squirrels and swim like otters. They have a vertical leap of more than a metre. They can survive falls of 10 m. Trap one in a corner, and *you* might be the one to come out worse for wear. The rat will fight like, well, a cornered rat: teeth stronger than iron have no trouble with human flesh. But don't worry about the teeth, save your terror for the saliva—possible visitors to your bloodstream will include hanta virus, salmonella, rabies, and two aptly named horrors: rat pox and rat-bite fever. The latter kills 13 per cent of those it infects.

As if all this weren't enough, rats are sex machines. Any female you see is pregnant: after a four-week gestation period and the birth of up to 12 pink, hairless offspring, she can ovulate, mate and conceive again within hours. She announces her availability by running through the colony spreading pheromones, upon which the males will line up to mate with her, more or less politely, so long as the biggest get to go first. The newborns will nurse for almost exactly the same length of time as the next litter takes to gestate, as the perpetual motion breeding machine rolls on. It's possible for a three-year-old female to have more than 500 offspring, with *their* young factored into the equation, she could be responsible for 16,000 new rats in one year, almost 100,000 in three.



THEY'RE DISEASE VECTORS, SEX MACHINES, AND TOP-NOTCH ARSONISTS

Male rats are ready, aye, ready to do their part. When they are not eating or fleeing for their lives, male rats are having sex. Despite the constant availability of receptive females, they aren't very patient during the rare downtimes. In the absence of females, males have sex with each other; in the absence of live rats of either gender, males have sex with dead ones. To cope with the sperm demand, a one-pound male rat has testicles—known familiarly as torpedoes—twice the size of a 400-lb gorilla's.

Rapid-fire reproduction that incorporates an entire colony's gene pool is the key to rat adaptability. *Twice* in the past 50 years, rats have evolved resistance to anti-coagulant poisons, our most potent anti-rat weapons. Fresh generations keep tried-and-true traits—lab rats 200 generations removed from the experience of a cat will still panic at the smell of one—and quickly spread new adaptations. So they carry on, as disease vectors, food despoilers (the WHO estimates rats annually consume or contaminate between 20 and 35 per cent of human food), and arsonists (their taste for electrical insulation means that up to a quarter of fires are rat caused).

Of course we hate them with a passion. For all recorded history, humans have been determinedly killing rats by the millions, to a scarcely lesser extent they have returned the favour, mostly by spreading plague. Langton, who met a few rat fanciers (yes, Virginia, there are such people) during his research, acknowledges their insistence that rats don't carry plague, their fleas do—a technical truth, he adds, that's about as meaningful as the statement that guns don't kill people, people do. In any event, the score after millennia of mutual slaughter is pretty much a tie. Rats remain the only mammals to match us in numbers and geographic range. Worst of all, it's our own fault: humans, the planet's all-time champion garbage producers, have made rats the success story they are.

A few millennia ago, rats were just another prey animal trying to scratch out a living in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Once humans invented farming, and large-scale food storage, the rat future was secure. By 1700 BCE the ancient Hindu text *Rig Veda* included curses hurled at grain-thieving rats. Cursing is about as effective as anything else we've tried. Although Langton writes hopefully of new trends in rat control, most of which boil down to convincing our careless species to reduce its garbage, history allows little room for optimism. We have fought rats in our homes and on our farms, with traps, guns and poison by the truckload. We shall never prevail. M



MAN vs. NATURE

BIG TURKEY WILL GET YOU IN THE GUTS

Cassowaries are menacing Australia. The birds, which resemble outsized turkeys, grow as tall as two metres and have been foraging in gardens following a devastating cyclone that felled fruit trees they depend on. They attack when they feel threatened and their claws can disembowel a human. "If you feel threatened," the state's conservation agency says on its website, "keep something solid between you and the cassowary—preferably a tree."

CORRIS GETTY

FIRST BUY THE DRESS, THEN FIND THE FIANCÉ

Some women don't wait for commitment before getting that dream gown

BY BARBARA RIGHTON • It was a Laura Ashley original. Lacy high-necked Victorian White. It was, in fact, a wedding gown. The young woman who bought it was on a Saturday afternoon shopping spree: she had no intention of coming home with a wedding dress, especially since she had no plans to get married. Still, she fell in love with the dress, arguably the second most important ingredient on any woman's big day. She hung it in a plastic bag on the back of her bedroom door. Five years later, still reed-slim, she wore it down the aisle. This story is recounted now, years later, by a friend, and although it sounds unusual, it happens, says Lena Tinuts at the Wardrobe Designer in Toronto's trendy Beach. "When you are young, you think you will be getting married for sure. So if you get ready, you don't have to go through everything at the last minute. You are just waiting to fill in that little male face."



SOMEDAY MY PRINCE WILL COME. 'You are young, you think you will get married for sure. So you get ready.'

MORE PROBLEMATIC ARE MOTHERS WHO BUY OUTFITS BEFORE THEIR DAUGHTERS HAVE A DATE SET

This year in Canada, about 300,000 women will get married. If it's their first big blowout nuptials, Statistics Canada says they will probably be 28 years old—and in the market for a dress that designers and fashion journalists suggest can cost anywhere from $500 to 10 times that much. How many will only buy the dress is anybody's guess. At *Weddingbells* magazine in Toronto, a twice-yearly compendium of everything to do with weddings right down to the table settings, dresses continue to be the No. 1 draw for readers. Says editor Alison McGill: "We just did research for the magazine, and we know that anytime we do a dress story, it's a big sell. A dress is one of the first buying decisions a prospective bride makes." Okay, but how about a wannabe who has no prospects at all? "Women talk about that in our chat room," McGill says. "It's a little odd, but I think as a woman I can understand it, especially if you are a shopper."

Donna Cappuccitti-Wilson, 43, is a former professional skater who lives in Oakville, Ont., with her three children. She remembers her wedding gown with genuine affection. She was 24 when she bought it at an atelier in Rome. "I went up these stairs in this old building. The designer had a whole floor—a beautiful suite—dedicated to brides. I changed in a little room and they brought me shoes and a robe to put on. And then the designer looked at me and she brought me this most perfect dress—high-necked, form-fitting, almost a mermaid look. It had a tulle skirt. And a tiny little train and beading."

Donna bought the dress. She had a fiancé, but three months later the relationship—one of those whirlwind, tempestuous ones—fizzled. The dress was boxed up and stored under her bed, and six years later when she did get married, she wore it down the aisle. "Some people thought it was bad luck, and they might have been right," she says with a laugh (the marriage didn't last). "But it was such a great dress. If I had died, I would have wanted to be buried in it."

Wedding dresses—far more than even the fanciest prom confection—seem to turn women into queens for a day. Maybe, like Donna, it's the experience. "Buying a wedding dress is not like going into the Gap and trying on jeans," McGill explains. "It's fit and altered and custom-built just for you." And even more than strappy shoes or the best cut blazers, wedding gowns appeal to something lasting and deep inside every-woman. Designer Tinuts remembers one twenty-something who saw a princess style—Scarlett O'Hara hoop skirt, nipped in waist, cascading lace—in her store window and had to have it, boyfriend or no. "She said she knew it was exactly what she wanted and she wanted to have it ready. You know, make the dress and he will come."

Why not, asks sales consultant Eleanor Rosenstein at the high-end Hugo Nicholson shop in Toronto's Yorkville. "If you see the dress of your dreams, how could it ever hurt?" What may be more problematic, in terms of family harmony, says Rosenstein, are mothers of the bride who come in to buy outfits before their daughters have any wedding dates set. "Usually they like to get the dress over and done with," she explains. It can be touchy territory, especially if there is a tiny bit of ill will between mother and daughter, Rosenstein says. "But if mom goes in and buys a beautiful dress, the daughter is not annoyed." McGill is horrified at such tactics. "That's like the ultimate family pressure."

Still, Tinuts says there is one thing that would be worse—buying a prom dress on spec. "I want to go so there for I will? Now that," she says, "would be really sad." M

HOW THEY DO IT IN...

GERMANY: TOURS AS PLUSH AS THE TOURISTS

Owners of stressed-out plush toys can send their teddy beers on a package tour to Munich, thanks to Teddy in Munich tours. For $210 plus shipping, Christopher Boehm and Elke Verheugen will send you snapshots of your bear touring famous sites such as the Hofbrauhaus or even bungee jumping. Hiromi Ichikawa, a Japanese businesswomen, is sending five toys on the tour. "I wanted to reward those who have always been there for me," she says.

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From anywhere... to anyone



RON HEFLIN/AP

Four-star hospitals

Medical centres are sprucing up—to promote better healing

BY REBECCA ADDELMAN • It sounds like a dream. You wake up alone and refreshed, with a view of a lush ravine out of the floor-to-ceiling bedroom window. Tasteful art hangs on the wall, and the faint aroma of lilacs fills the air. A friendly woman enters, carrying breakfast. She checks your vitals and tells you that the doctor will be around shortly. In the meantime, you can saunter down the hall to the nearby Body Shop. This is the new reality in patient care, and it's changing the way public hospitals across Canada do business.

With the help of forward-thinking architects and a new "customer is always right" mentality, the drab, antiseptic hospital of the 1950s is undergoing a transformation. The new model puts the patient first and creates warmer, cozier spaces. "The whole idea," says Dr. Annmarie Adams, a McGill professor and expert in medical architecture, "is to make people feel like the hospital is a familiar place. We're seeing references to hotels, shopping malls, and home." Private rooms, bigger windows, Burger King in the lobby, and life-affirming colours instead of sterile, white walls: these are just some of the tools that today's doctors are using alongside the stethoscope.

At Toronto's new Bloorview Kids Rehab, the design and atmosphere is meant to feel "more like an inn," says lead architect Terry Montgomery. Every detail—from the tactile art to the third-floor shaded terrace to the refrigerator-equipped snack zones—was designed to suit the patients' needs. In Montreal, plans for the new McGill University Health Centre—a $1.2 billion redevelopment project that will fold five downtown hospitals into two fashionable mega-centres on the outskirts of town—include patient control of a room's scent, sound, and lighting. And an overhaul planned for Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, also headed by Montgomery, will be a mixed-use affair. "50 per cent hospital," he says, "and 50 per cent other, like condos or businesses."

As Canadians grow accustomed to ever more upscale hotels, airport lobbies and spas, it may not seem strange that hospitals are racing to adapt. And they're only following the lead of the U.S., where swanky clinics offer room service, four-star cuisine, and bedside Internet access on flat-screen TVs. But Canadian hospitals don't have to worry about turning a profit or attracting customers. Frills like these aren't the concern of a publicly funded system. So why the rush to renovate?

BETTER VIEWS, SNACK ZONES, AND INDIVIDUAL ROOM SCENT CONTROLS ARE JUST SOME OF THE TOOLS

Dr. Nicholas Steinmetz, the man behind the new MUHC, has an idea. He says better care, in a more pleasing environment, leads to better healing. He cites a study of patients recuperating from gallbladder operations. Subjects with a view of the park healed faster than those convalescing with a view of a brick wall. "Lighting, views, noise, control of your own environment are very important elements in the healing process," he says. "If you don't have those things, you're stressed, and you have a feeling of helplessness."

The shift started in pediatrics. By the late '70s, experts realized that very sick kids needed more than high-tech care; they needed to be set at ease. Children's hospitals became more colourful, private rooms were introduced. Then, in 1956, the architectural firm Zeidler Roberts constructed Canada's first hospital atrium at Edmonton's Walter Mackenzie Medical Centre. The large glass wing brought in streams of sunlight and connected patients to an open space. The trend spread: in 1993, Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital opened its atrium, replete with a giant dancing pig dangling from the rafters and a shopping concourse. The kids, long isolated by illness, now have access to the outside world. People walk in off the street to browse the shops or grab a burger. A little tyke with liver disease can hop on a tricycle, grab his IV, and ride over to Roots to buy a Team Canada T-shirt.

Adult hospitals have changed too. As with the more sophisticated decor, patient needs are now being incorporated into hospital policy. Visiting hours are more flexible so they can be tailored to each individual patient, and new floor designs put the nursing stations in the centre—easier to access by the infirm. Birthing rooms, too, are being updated to feel more like home, with wood furniture and lacy linens. The aim is to make the experience relaxing and as un-clinical as possible.

Adams laments the loss of the old way. "When I gave birth," she recalls, "I was put in a hokey, fake bedroom with flowers, a rocking chair, and a painting of Venice. When it turned out I was going to have a Caesarean, the caregivers pushed these buttons—and the oak cabinet opened up and the equipment popped out and it became an operating room. I found that comforting." She adds, "And if I ever see that painting of Venice again—"

Still, most health care providers welcome the changes. Joan Ferguson, Bloorview's vice-president of programs and services, says the

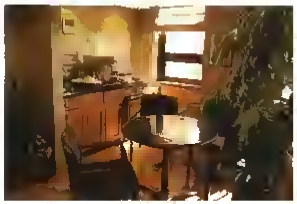
TONICS

LOOSE TEETH AND HAIR? TRY PEANUT MILK

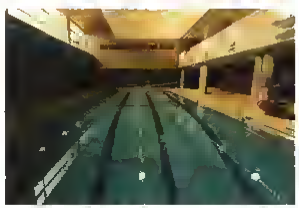
A peanut-based elixir invented by Jack Chang, a San Francisco-area café owner, supposedly cures gum disease, slows hair loss, boosts the immune system and even improves sex. Chang brewed the drink, which contains peanuts, herbs and grains, after his love of eating peanuts was interrupted by severe gum disease, which had made his teeth loose. He and and his partners have opened a plant that produces 240,000 bottles of elixir a year.

results are immediate "Parents are telling me, 'Finally, this is a place that shows respect for us.'" Dr. Alexandra Harrison of the Calgary Health Region has discovered another upside. "Providers like it," she says. "It's a classic win-win. Patients are happier and staff are happier. What could be bad about this?"

One answer: raised expectations. Not only do Canadians now want top-flight equipment and buildings at no extra cost, we're becoming more demanding, too. Homemade "do not disturb" signs are popping up on private-room doorknobs, and, says Adams, "nurses tell me that patients become more







HOSPITALS in Detroit (top), Dallas (middle), and Toronto's Bloorview Kids Rehab

like hotel guests. They put their trays outside and they say, 'It's been there for an hour, why haven't you picked it up yet?'"

But how sustainable is this trend? Steinmetz claims that the new MUHC will be cheaper to build and run than updating Montreal's five old hospitals, but until the centre is up and running, there's no real proof. And given the SARS scare, some question the wisdom of inviting the public in to shop and eat. Nevertheless, the race to abandon old buildings and replace them with made-to-measure hospitals continues. Still, Adams says, "If we were really smart, we'd figure out what was good about the old buildings and put that in the new ones." M

CRIMINALS, FLAKES LOSERS

The CFL has a problem, even if Ricky's charming

BY JOHN INTINI AND NANCY MACDONALD •

Ricky Williams takes a hand-off, sweeps right and bursts past a couple of defenders, untouched—his new Reebok high tops kicking up grass at the Toronto Argonauts' training camp in Mississauga, Ont. Only then does the Argos' latest NFL rent-a-star really accelerate—propelled by freakish calf muscles that bulge from under a pair of white knee-high socks.

Running backs in the CFL aren't normally this strong, this fast, this gifted. In fact, the former Heisman trophy winner, who has been one of the best backs in the NFL since 1999, is way too good for these parts. But here he is—for a season, anyway—thanks to a one-year ban from the NFL following his fourth failed drug test (the first three for marijuana, the league will say only that the most recent was for something else—it's rumoured to be a herb).

Some consider Williams (from whom the NFL requires up to 10 drug tests a month) the poster boy for all that's wrong with the CFL—a league with a long history of welcoming deadbeats. NFL hall-of-fame quarterback Joe Theismann, who played with the Argos in the early '70s, says the signing "shows classlessness in the organization," while Hamilton Tiger-Cat legend Angelo Mosca says it's further proof the league is "a dumping ground for illegitimate people."

Still, that's tough to square with the five-foot-10 inch, 220-lb. goofball stretched out on the large leather couch in a team trailer after practice. Even though Williams hasn't smoked a joint in about 14 months and has chopped his trademark beard and dreads, he is no less the gentle hippie now than he was in 2004 when he literally walked away from the Dolphins—after his third failed drug test—and ended up in the Australian outback, living out of a tent and looking for God. It's just that now he's replaced pot with yoga.

He's soft-spoken but not nearly as shy as he's often described. In fact, he's confident. And a bit verbose—a product of his new-wave thinking. "I don't necessarily believe in right or wrong," he says, when asked about the failed drug tests. "If I'd never smoked marijuana, chances are I would have never found yoga. So I can't say smoking marijuana, for me, was wrong."

These days, Williams wakes up around 5 a.m. to perform sun salutations, meditation, breathing exercises and yoga postures before breakfast—which usually consists of fruit, as well as yogourt and granola (he's vegetarian). He earned his yoga teacher's certificate in India last year and plans to teach it twice a week at a Toronto studio. In his duffle bag, which he's been living out of for the last six months, he carries items for his altar ("mainly pictures of uplifting people"), clothes, a Bible, the Bhagavad-Gita and a couple of astrology books—a new passion.

Williams is simply a yoga-loving optimist—and hardly the most objectionable one in this lot. Which is not the same as saying the CFL doesn't have a problem (remember, this is a league that gave cokehead Dexter Manley another shot in the early '90s after he was tossed from the NFL). There's nothing in the rule book, for example, that precludes guys from playing because they've had brushes with the law. Recently, the TiCats signed Anthony Davis, who pleaded guilty in 2003 to punching his girlfriend in the face (prosecutors later dropped the case after Davis took part in a first offenders program). Winnipeg added Kyries Hebert to their pre-season roster even though he pleaded guilty this off-season to two misdemeanours in connection to a domestic dispute—he was arrested, but not charged, for allegedly holding his wife's head under water and threatening to kill her in a fight over an unpaid cellphone bill.

In another controversial case, Trevis Smith was still a Saskatchewan Roughrider when he was charged with two counts of aggravated assault for allegedly having unprotected sex with two women without telling them he was HIV positive. (He was suspended immediately, his trial begins in October.)

The league is even open to guys with criminal convictions. "We're like many other employers that do not discriminate for criminal offences," says Michael Copeland, the CFL's chief operating officer. "If you have a criminal record you're entitled to seek employment."

The CFL has no drug policy—at all—making it a refuge for NFL stars who are riding out suspensions. In addition to Williams, Onterrio Smith is the other big American import this spring. The Winnipeg Blue Bomber running back has already been tagged by fans as the Blue Bonger. Now clean, Smith—who spent seven of the last 12 months in rehab—says he was once young and careless, and had a problem with marijuana. Following four failed tests, Smith was caught in May 2005, yellow-handed, at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport with dried urine and "The Original Whizzinator" (used to beat drug tests). Bombers management are taking the one-year, $65,000 chance on the 25-year-old—who faces a civil suit in Minneapolis later this month related to a sexual assault case.

Many with troubled pasts end up in the care of Argo head coach Mike "Pinball" Clemons. Argo offensive tackle Bernard Williams, a first-round pick in the 1994 NFL entry draft, was suspended a couple of times by the league for marijuana. Receiver R. Jay Soward became an alcoholic and was banned from the NFL indefinitely in 2002 for repeatedly breaking the league's substance abuse policy. Wideout Robert Baker is another product of the CFL redemption plan. Several years ago, he spent 10 months in a maximum security prison for trafficking cocaine. He thinks Williams should get a break. "Ricky deserves a second chance, a third chance," Baker told the *New York Times*. "As long as you're breathing, you deserve a chance. He ain't killed nobody yet. He hasn't taken a life, so he deserves a chance."

The pipeline may soon close partway. Last week, CFL commissioner Tom Wright announced the league is talking with the NFL about a reciprocal agreement that would see each league uphold the other's suspensions. Of course, until then, the CFL remains a rehab centre for NFL drug offenders.

Clemons is all about second (or third, or fourth...) chances, and has high hopes for his latest reconstruction project. "If a league is thought less of for giving people an opportunity and helping them turn their life around," he says, "that's where I want to be." It's a nice sentiment, but Williams isn't exactly a charity case. He's a game-breaker. A guy who puts fans in the seats. In fact, he's already proven to be a major box office draw (Argo ticket sales were moving 20 times faster than normal after he signed last week). Orders for his No. 27 jersey are skyrocketing.



Williams says he didn't seek out the opportunity with the Argos—it simply presented itself to him. "When I walked away from football, I really walked away," he says. "Football didn't let me go." If so, he's lucky (or has good karma, at least), considering that he has kids to support (a seven-year-old daughter, a four-year-old son and another on the way) and owes millions to the Dolphins for breaking his contract in 2004. Williams' salary with the Argos is estimated to be worth at least $240,000. "Ring on my finger or not, it will be obvious by the end of the year why I was supposed to be here," he says. "If one person looks at their life a little differently because of me, that justifies why I'm here." Does he miss Australia? "I don't really miss anything," he says. "Missing means that you're not living in the present—I always try to live in the present." On his right forearm, Williams has a tattoo of Bob Marley. His favourite Marley tune? *Running Away*. But that's an old tattoo. That's not Ricky Williams now. M

'IF I'D NEVER SMOKED MARIJUANA,' SAYS WILLIAMS, 'CHANCES ARE I WOULD HAVE NEVER FOUND YOGA'



WILLIAMS is serving out his suspension in three-down country; Travis Smith (right)

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTOPHER WAHL (TOP); TROY FLEECE/CP

FAR LEFT, TOP TO BOTTOM: COURTESY ST. JOHN REHABILITATION HOSPITAL; JEFF LIN/AP; FERNANDO MORALES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Oil is thicker than water—and it spreads

Alumni of the last Oiler dynasty teach a new generation how to win

BY KEN MACQUEEN • The Edmonton Oilers' locker room in the bowels of Rexall Place is pure working class—and working classroom. A Ping-Pong table is the only hint of luxury, that and an electric fan, straining, and failing, to remove the sweaty evidence of a hard morning practice last week. The room also reeks of history, with perhaps a whiff of future glory. The Oilers generated five Stanley Cups in seven seasons between 1984 and 1990, and a whole lot of lean years thereafter. But that dynasty also produced a legacy, which makes this spring's crazy ride to the Stanley Cup finals not nearly as improbable as might first appear. From this room, and those glory years, emerged a graduate class of coaches and managers now shaping the Oilers and other teams throughout the National Hockey League.

A case in point: Oilers general manager Kevin Lowe—the first NHL draft pick in the team's history in 1979 and a key player in all five Oiler cup wins. He's built a coaching staff of ex-teammates: head coach Craig MacTavish, with three Oiler cup wins as a checking forward, and assistant coaches Charlie Huddy and Craig Simpson, who played in five and two Oiler cup wins respectively. Success is a great teacher, says Lowe. "All the lessons here were about team first and foremost, an appreciation of talent, and how to work with players," he says. "We lived it every day. If you had your eyes open and your ears open that stuff sinks in." It's not that the coaches dwell on the days gone by, says Simpson, but they impart the disdain those championship era Oilers held for second place. "The thing I'm impressed with in this group," he says, looking around the locker room, "is that there's no sense of accomplishment. Yet."

Some players leave elite teams with great memories, a pile of cash and a fistful of Stanley Cup rings. But for avid students of the game, ice time with the Oilers of the '80s, much like the Montreal Canadiens of the '70s, was also the equivalent of an advanced degree in hockey management. The Canadiens, under legendary Habs manager Sam Pollock, were the Harvard Business School of hockey. A selection of graduates who migrated to leadership positions throughout the league includes Cliff Fletcher (Calgary, Toronto), Ron Caron (St. Louis), Scotty Bowman (Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Detroit), John Ferguson (New York Rangers, Winnipeg), Al MacNeil (Atlanta-Calgary), Serge Savard (Montreal), Ken Dryden (Toronto). And more. When Doug Risebrough, a former player in that Habs dynasty, became general manager of the Minnesota Wild, he went back to the well, recruiting former teammates Jacques Lemaire, Mano Tremblay and Guy Lapointe to coach and scout. "Guys who have been in winning situations are attractive because they know what it takes to win," he explains. "If you're a player and you're involved in a successful team, you think, 'Why wouldn't I want to try to do the same thing in management?' "

FROM EDMONTON TO PHOENIX, DALLAS TO OTTAWA, GRADUATES POP UP. WINNING 'SINKS IN' SAYS LOWE.



MacTAVISH, Lowe and Gretzky. 'The lessons are about team, first and foremost'

Hence, the echo effect from Edmonton's glory era. A guy named Wayne Gretzky captained four of the Oilers' cup victories, and is now coach and part-owner of the Phoenix Coyotes. He was there in the Oilers' dressing room in Anaheim, May 27, offering congratulations after his alma mater beat the Ducks to advance to the finals. "Oil," he said, "is thicker than water." And oil spreads. Glen Sather, who assembled one of the greatest teams in hockey history during his 24 years with the Oilers, is now general manger of the New York Rangers. And where did the Oilers fly last Thursday, to prepare for the finals in an eastern time zone and to escape the fever pitch of Edmonton? Why, north of New York City, to the Rangers' suburban practice facility—oil being thicker than water.

The list goes on. Jari Kurri returned to Finland where he is general manager of the national team. Three ex-Oiler netminders are now NHL goaltending coaches: Andy Moog in Dallas, Grant Fuhr with Gretzky in Phoenix; and Ron Low (also an ex-Oilers coach) in Ottawa. John Muckler, variously an assistant, co-coach or coach during all of the Oilers' cup wins, is now general manager of the Senators, a team that habitually tanks in the playoffs. Apparently the Oiler imprint can grow faint.

Not so in Edmonton, where it, literally, is embedded in the battered metal of two doors that lead from the locker room to the video library. Back in the day, those doors led to the coaches' office. One is plastered with neat rows of stickers, one for every playoff victory in Oiler history. The earliest stickers, now faded and ratty, read: "Do it Oilers." After the first cup win in 1984, the stickers read "Do it again Oilers." The last row to end with a Stanley Cup sticker was 16 years ago.

The doors also carry some deep dents—echoes of the Oilers' boom time. "They're actually from the championship years," Lowe says. The coaches would come out of their office to offer a pre-game blessing, and players like Mark Messier, Esa Tikkanen and Paul Coffey would pound the doors with their sticks. "The bigger the game, the bigger the bang," says Lowe, smiling. "Those doors," he predicts, "will go to the Hockey Hall of Fame some day."

Just not yet, not when opportunity knocks. They serve to remind that victory leaves its mark. M

With Charlie Gillis

FROM LEFT: RON LEBLANC/GETTY IMAGES; IAN TOMLINSON/ALLSPORT/GETTY IMAGES; FRANCIS SPECKER/AP

ONE FOR THE BOOKS

KEEPING SOCCER PLAYERS' MINDS ON THE GAME

Ukraine's soccer coach has dangled a reward in front of his World Cup team: reach the semifinals and they can have sex. Oleg Blokhin has banned the team from making love with their wives so they can better keep their minds on the game. If they make the semifinals, though, "I will personally send my players to see their wives." Blokhin told a Russian sports newspaper. "In fact I will drag them to their wives, whether they want to or not."



THE PERRINE BRIDGE in southern Idaho, Jason Cooper (below), before the jump

GOING OVER THE EDGE

A Calgary BASE jumper survives a 486-foot drop with a failed parachute

BY MICHAEL FRISCOLANTI • Jason Cooper is a smart guy. Everyone says so. At 29, his resumé is loaded with degrees and scholarships and academic awards. This summer, the University of Calgary grad student plans to add another title to his curriculum vitae: doctor. His Ph.D. thesis in physics explores the determination of molecular properties for ethane and the application of *ab initio* techniques. Translation: Jason Cooper was blessed with a few extra brain cells.

Not that you would think so after hearing about his mishap in small-town Idaho, where the soon-to-be professor zipped on an armoured jacket, climbed over a guardrail, and hurled himself off a very high bridge. Six seconds and 486 feet later, Cooper smashed into a shallow river, his body soaked in mud and pain and entangled in a parachute. "He hit at a very high speed," recalls Tom Aiello, who witnessed the thud. "People at the top were pretty much certain that he died on impact."

He didn't. In fact, apart from a few broken bones and a collapsed lung, doctors expect the Alberta native to make a full recovery. His favourite hobby didn't fare too badly, either. Despite his injuries, fellow thrill-seekers flocked back to the bridge the very next morning, hopping over the side until the sun went down. "In a sport like this, you understand there are risks you take," Aiello says. "If that was a wake-up call, then you should have woken up before the wake up call."

This is the world of BASE jumping, skydiving's lesser known cousin. Short for Building, Antenna, Span and Earth, loyal adherents hurl themselves off almost anything with a view, from cliffs to skyscrapers. Quality of life, they often brag, is better than quantity. And no place attracts a larger quantity of jumpers than Twin Falls, a southern Idaho city that quietly promotes itself as home to the Perrine Bridge—the only bridge in America from which you can leap year-round without a permit. A free for-all free fall.

Like dozens of other jumpers, Jason Cooper and his twin brother Michael (Jason is older by three minutes) spent Memorial Day weekend in Twin Falls. Both have been skydiving for more than a decade, BASE jumping almost as long. "That bridge is something we're pretty familiar with," says Michael, who works as a computer programmer in Calgary. On May 26, a Friday, the brothers planned an especially complex drop.



'IF THAT WAS A WAKE-UP CALL, THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE WOKEN UP BEFORE THE WAKE-UP CALL'

BASE jumpers typically leap alone, plummeting toward earth for a few short seconds before tossing a "pilot chute" into the sky, which yanks on a bridle cord and unleashes the full chute from the pack. For this jump, however, the Cooper twins stood on either side of another man, Nick Rugai, who held their bridles in his hands. "What was supposed to happen," Michael explains, half-laughing, "is that the three of us would jump off, and the centre guy, when his canopy caught him, would still be holding our pilot chutes and he'd continue to hold onto them until it pulled our parachute." The result is supposed to resemble a waterfall, with each chute opening in split second succession.

Things didn't go quite according to plan. All three leapt at the same time, but while the middle man fell straight down, the twins jumped outward from the ledge. In a blink, Rugai was well below the Coopers and falling fast. And because he was still gripping their bridle cords, the force sent both twins into a roll. Michael managed to recover, but Jason kept spinning, snagging his chute with each revolution. "I looked down and I saw Jason with his back down, face up," Michael recalls. "It looked like a flag he was hanging on to. It was just this piece of fabric flapping over his head." At the last possible moment, the physics major lifted his legs and slammed—back first—into the Snake River, no more than a foot deep.

Cooper remains in the intensive care unit of a Boise hospital, but his brother says he is alert and walking around—and well aware that he probably shouldn't be. "It certainly gives you food for thought," Michael says. "But we've spent a lot of time talking about these kinds of things. He's been very insistent that if something happened BASE jumping and he died, it is very, very important to him that the responsibility for his last decision was his." He now has another decision to make: whether to quit while he's ahead. "He's 50/50," Michael says.

Expect those odds to improve. For dedicated jumpers, there is always something that beckons them back to the bridge. Fear. Adrenalin. A thirst to find the edge, then cross it. "When somebody gets hurt, it's not like we're walking around shaking our heads going, 'Oh, how did this happen?' " Aiello says. "We know exactly how it happened. You're pushing the limits of human possibility." Albert Einstein, the most famous physicist of all, worded it another way: "Two things are infinite," he once said. "The universe and human stupidity. And I'm not sure about the universe." M

ASHLEY SMITH/THE TIMES-NEWS/AP; CHRIS BAZIL

DAY IN THE SUN

AMERICA'S OLDEST BRAND-NEW CITIZEN

Seventy-nine years after Mexican-born Maria Soledad Sarabia Lagareta entered the United States, she has finally become a citizen at age 100. Soledad, who was feted in her Hawaii home after the naturalization ceremony, delayed applying for citizenship because she feared her sons would grow up forgetting their Mexican heritage. The former Hollywood seamstress decided recently to make her move. After all, her sons are in their sixties.

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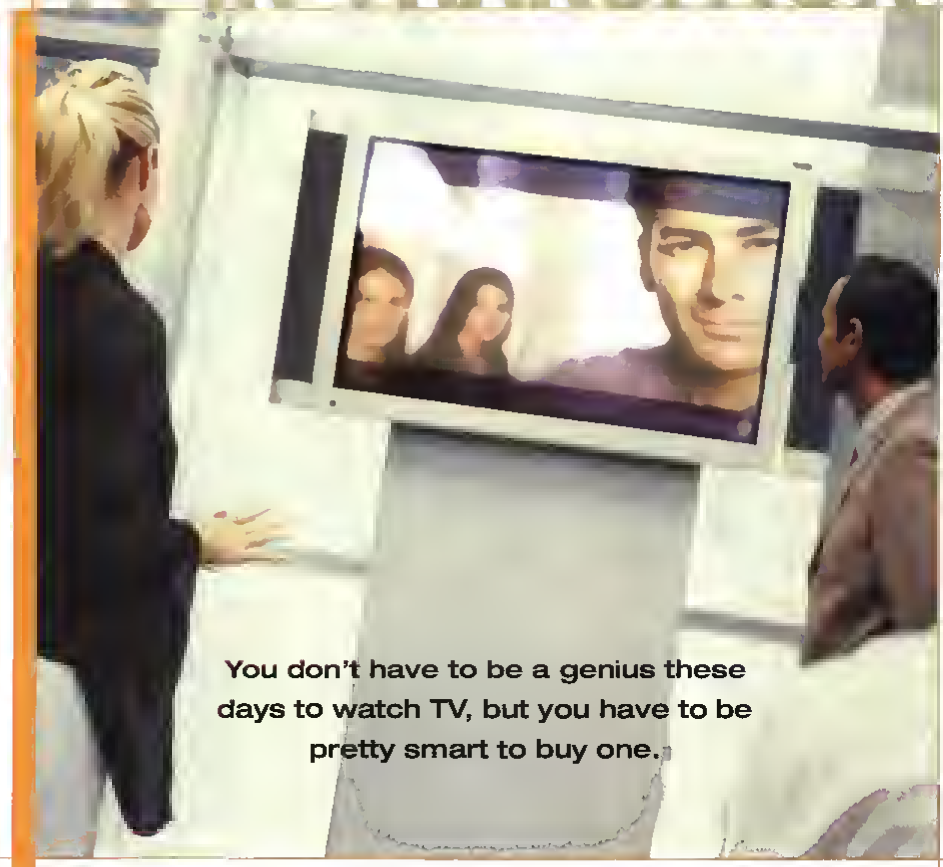
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Based on network drive tests in the majority of urban Canadian centres within Rogers Wireless footprint comparing voice services of the major wireless providers. Voice clarity may vary due to customer's handset, network availability and capacity, interference, topography and environmental conditions and other factors. ™Trademarks of Rogers Communications Inc. used under licence. © 2006 Rogers Wireless.

TV IN TRANSITION



You don't have to be a genius these days to watch TV, but you have to be pretty smart to buy one.

Consumers can choose from at least three different technologies, each with its own variations, in the TV itself. They can also select one of several technologies for recording, storing and replaying their favourite shows. In making these selections, they also have to decide on the size and configuration of the TV and whether they want to buy their components separately or packaged together in the same unit.

HITACHI
Inspire the Next





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Hitachi.ca

Faced with such an overwhelming technological landscape, many consumers have simply hunkered down to wait until a clear path emerges to lead them to the right choices. That explains why fewer than one in 10 Canadian households currently uses a personal video recorder (PVR), for example, and why only a fraction of Canadians subscribe to high-definition television (HDTV) services. In fact, if you ask Canadians to explain the difference between a conventional set and a high-definition TV, precious few could do it.

Amidst the confusion and uncertainty that currently prevails in the marketplace, unwary consumers who buy low-priced technology sometimes get less than they pay for. Given the choice between a $2,000 set from a reputable manufacturer and a $900 set from a no name vendor few Canadians can tell the difference until they realize that the ultra-sharp high definition picture on their new set doesn't look much different than the picture on their son's ten-year-old 12-inch portable. Since price influences almost every Canadian who buys a new TV, that means a lot of people get burned.

When it comes to TV, the possibilities may seem endless, but so are the pitfalls unless you know what you're doing. Here's some help.

Four tips for choosing a new TV

1. Is the new set HD-ready? Look for an HD Ready logo, which all HDTV products should carry.
2. Make sure the new set has high-definition multimedia interface (HDMI) connectivity. This gives you a direct transmission free of the disruptions or noises experienced with analog signal broadcasts.
3. Check that related technology – for example, the set-top box you use to receive your digital TV services – is HD-compatible.
4. If in any doubt, always check with your retailer before you buy.

Source: Telewest (UK)

THE WAR ONE
[illegible]T TELEVISION SET

Most people nod their heads when they hear the phrase high definition TV. They may not know exactly what it means, but they've heard it before, and they know it means something good.

And they're right. Among other things, HDTV delivers a wider picture, so you can see more of the court during a basketball game or more of the ocean during an underwater sequence on the Great Barrier Reef.

With a conventional TV a viewer may watch the catcher, the pitcher and the batter in one camera shot. With HDTV, says Douglas Beeforth president of Rogers Sportsnet, the viewer can see the catcher, pitcher and batter as well as the first baseman. That's about as much as you can see with your own two eyes if you're sitting in the stands. Of equal value, Beeforth says, HDTV technology increases, by a factor of five, the clarity of the picture on the screen.

HDTV is the clearest and sharpest way of displaying images of any image display technology available today, according to editors of the Plasma TV Buying Guide. "HDTV adds depth to televised images in a way that is unmatched by any other source product. Cable and satellite providers are carrying more HD but can at times compress bandwidth."

At the moment, not all HDTVs are created equal. Some are HDTV-compatible which means you need an external tuner to watch HDTV programming via cable or satellite. Others integrate the tuner into the set. "Anything that's HDTV-ready is sufficient, because most people in Canada use a set-top box from their cable or satellite provider" says Kevin Moran, TV product specialist with Panasonic Canada.

Bell ExpressVu, for example, has offered HDTV broadcasts since 1999 says the company's marketing vice president, Pat Button. "We now deliver more than 40 channels in that format."

> **"The cathode ray tube [CRT], developed in the 1930s, and dramatically improved upon by Sony in 1969 with its ground-breaking Trinitron technology, is still the most common TV technology found in Canadian homes."**

Canadians have jumped on the HDTV bandwagon, but they haven't fully exploited the technology's potential, observes Robert Gumiela, Senior Director of Marketing for Toshiba of Canada's consumer electronics group. "Canadians own 2.1 million high-definition sets" he points out, "but only 275,000 Canadians subscribe to a high definition service."

Cost may influence a consumer's acceptance of HDTV, but so does confusion about the alphabet soup of TV technology. It doesn't end with HDTV. Concepts such as LCD, DLP, SED and plasma may persuade consumers just to stay at home with their five-year-old CRT for a few more years.

"The cathode ray tube [CRT] developed in the 1930s, and dramatically improved upon by Sony in 1969 with its ground-breaking Trinitron technology is still the most common TV technology found in Canadian homes," says John Challinor, general manager of advertising and corporate communications for Sony of Canada Ltd. "It's still the most economical to purchase, still offers one of the better pictures of any competing technology and has a longer life than most technologies, at an estimated 60,000 hours and is available in HD-ready and HDTV formats."

But for the more adventurous consumer who wants to look beyond the CRT, "the key is to decide where you'll use the TV," advises Andrew Dorcas, senior manager in the digital A/V division at Samsung Electronics Canada Inc. "Don't worry about all the hype."

Here's a rundown of the technologies that you might encounter in your local TV store, how they work and where you can use them most effectively.

Digital Light Processing (DLP)

Companies like Samsung, Toshiba and Hewlett Packard use DLP technology in some of their TV sets. The technology relies on over one million microscopic mirrors smaller than the width of a human hair that tilt toward or away from a white lamp inside the DLP television. The amount of light reflected by the mirror determines the lightness or darkness of a pixel on the face of the projection screen. This process happens thousands of times a second and is extremely sensitive. For example, the technology can reproduce 1,024 shades of gray.

DLP displays range from about 42 inches to 72 inches on the diagonal. Big DLP TVs usually perform better than smaller ones. "For a big-screen home theatre," says Toshiba's Gumiela, "you can get a 72-inch rear-projection DLP for a lot less money than you'd pay for a competing technology."

Liquid Crystal Display (LCD)

Sharp, Sony, Toshiba, LG Canada and several other well-known companies manufacture LCD TVs as small as 13 inches and as large as 65 inches with prices to match – exceeding $15,000 at the high end. In an LCD screen, a matrix of thin transistors transmits voltage through liquid-crystal filled cells sandwiched between two sheets of glass. The electrical charge causes the crystals to unwind to a specific point. Each crystal filters white light generated by a lamp behind the flat-panel screen.

An LCD monitor displays precise colours in subtle variations that appear almost life-like. Among other advantages, you can build an LCD aquarium populated with fish that don't need food to keep swimming. For TVs of 32 inches or less, an LCD works extremely well, says Panasonic's Moran.

Mid-sized LCD monitors around 22 inches usually perform best. They also display finely detailed scenes more clearly than a DLP television, in brighter and more accurate colours. But DLP TVs generally cost less and are widely available in larger sizes.

Plasma

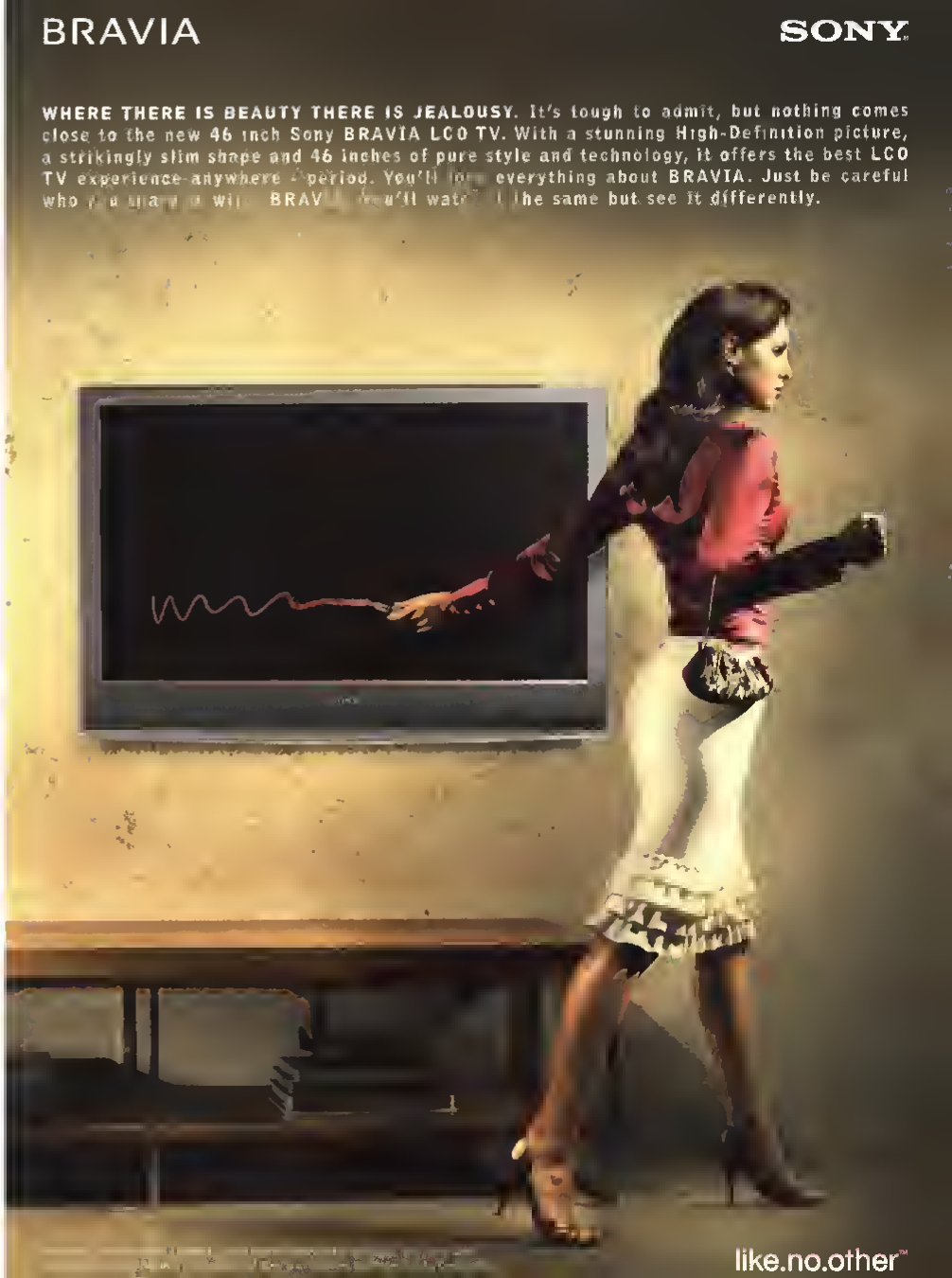
HP, Hitachi, Samsung and several other manufacturers have developed plasma flat-screen TVs ranging from 13 inches to 50 inches or more, although Sony stopped selling them last year. A plasma screen consists of hundreds of thousands of individual pixel cells. When an electrical pulse excites gases such as xenon or neon, the cell glows and produces light, on the same basic principal as the technology of a fluorescent light. The light illuminates red, green and blue phosphors contained in each cell to display the desired colour sequence.

Sony's Challinor describes plasma as "the Paris Hilton of TV technologies, because of its high maintenance." But others who still sell them say plasma offers advantages, especially for large-screen home-theatre applications in darkly lit rooms.

"Plasma is absolutely superior," says Hitachi product manager Brandon Osmond. "For picture quality, reproduction of colours and convenience, you can't beat plasma." Pointing out that Hitachi incorporates its own proprietary technology into its plasma screens resulting in lower power consumption, Osmond says that the price of larger plasma units will drop in the near future, making them even more attractive for consumers.

Cathode Ray Tube (CRT)

Most Canadians still watch television on a conventional CRT TV. These bulging, badly balanced sets take up half the room because they incorporate an electron gun near the back of the



TV tube. In a process first invented more than a century ago the gun fires streams of electrons at the front of the television tube, which is coated with phosphors. These phospors glow when the electrons hit them, creating images on the screen. "Its weight limits CRT's potentially larger screen size," says Challinor. For example, a 34-inch CRT-based TV weighs more than 200 pounds." Despite the age and limitations of the technology, CRT TVs continue to evolve and improve.

Surface-conduction electron-emitter display (SED)
Just when you thought you'd heard all the acronyms Toshiba and Canon announced that they'll soon start selling SED flat panel TVs in about a year.

Like conventional CRTs, SEDs operate when electrons collide with a phosphor-coated screen to emit light. But instead of firing from a gun, the electrons in an SED jump across a narrow slit hardly as wide as a pane of glass between two electric poles. When they collide with the phosphor-coated glass plate, they cause the emission of light.

SEDs generate dynamic colours and a sharp picture equivalent to the output of an LCD or plasma display but with screens of more than 40 inches that are only several centimeters thick. They also consume less power even than LCDs.

Confusing as they may be, the demand for all of these flat-panel technologies is soaring. The global market for LCD and plasma TVs grew 73% to US$40.5 billion in 2005, according to the research firm DisplaySearch, as people traded in their bulky CRT models for sleek flat units that hang on a wall.

At the moment, the top companies in LCD and plasma display TVs are Japanese, such as Sony, Sharp and Matsushita Electric Industrial, which makes Panasonic products. But companies like Hewlett-Packard are also stepping into the ring. With its expertise and track record in colour printing and networking, HP currently offers LCD plasma and DLP units as large as 65 inches.

Flat-panel, not high-definition

If you're searching for an LCD, DLP or plasma TV, you should know that a flat-panel digital TV doesn't necessarily deliver a high-definition picture.

Many small LCD flat-panel televisions and many larger more inexpensive plasma TVs merely enhance the definition, but do not raise it to the level of true HDTV.

They can accept an HDTV signal, but they don't convert it into HDTV output. They simply display it at a lower resolution. Always check first with a trusted retailer or expert.

THINGS ABOUT PVRS

A personal video recorder (PVR) is an interactive TV recording device – in essence, a sophisticated set-top box with recording capability (although it is not necessarily kept on top of the television set). Some LCD and plasma TVs include a built-in PVR.

A PVR records and plays back television programs but, unlike the VCR, it stores the programs in digital rather than analog form. Like a VCR, a PVR has the ability to pause, rewind, stop or fast-forward a recorded program. Because the PVR can record a program and replay it almost immediately with a slight time lag, you can manipulate live programs as though they were recorded programs (which they actually are).

Most PVRs come as part of a subscriber service. Bell ExpressVu, for example, started offering PVRs in 2001. The service lets viewers search for shows according to type (movies or baseball games, for example), choose among video-on-demand (VOD) options, or shop or do banking.

There are a number of controversial issues surrounding the capabilities of PVRs and similar technologies. For example, some PVRs let you skip through commercials by using a 30-second auto-skip function. This capacity is popular with consumers but not with advertisers, although a recent study shows that PVRs have little or no impact on the effectiveness of prime-time advertising. (The study was commissioned by the four largest U.S. television networks, but if you can't trust CBS, what's the world coming to?)

PVR technology comes in a wide range of shapes, sizes and brand names, only a few of which are available in Canada. The Canadian government in its dubious wisdom has made the rest illegal. The hardware that comes in Canada through cable or satellite services usually replaces an existing digital-cable set-top box. That means the top of your television won't look like an electronics kiosk at a flea market. Copyright issues have also prevented PVRs from becoming a realistic alternative to the lowly video recorder, and those issues won't disappear soon.

Given such a maelstrom of rules, regulations and qualifications, it's no wonder that most Canadian TV viewers regard PVRs with some skepticism. Fewer than one in 10 Canadian TV viewers uses a PVR, although surveys show that they're curious about the devices.

Their interest might turn into action if a new cable service called remote storage (RS) DVR catches on in Canada. RS DVR records programs at the cable-head end, rather than in the viewer's home. Subscribers can still pause live TV, record shows and skip commercials (which they don't do anyway, according to CBS). The service will likely incur a raft of lawsuits in the U.S. But if the technology



Service available to residential customers only. Internet access and Electronic Video Download and Delivery Service (EVDDS) require credit card and are limited to one account. Pricing, offer subject to change without notice and cannot be combined with any other offer. Taxes extra. Other conditions apply. *Offer ends July 4, 2006. $20 monthly credit available with new accounts on a 2-yr rental equipment agreement with a min. monthly programming value of $68 (English) or $48 (French) for the first 12 months. $10 monthly credit also available with min. monthly programming value of $47 (English) or $32 (French). Monthly equipment rental fee extra. Early termination fees apply. Customer must purchase a rental kit, register the kit between March 31 and July 4, 2006 and activate the system within 60 days of registration. $49.99 rental kit credit then applies on the account, before taxes. ExpressVu is a trade-mark of Bell ExpressVu L.P. ™©2005 VANOC. Used under license. Dolby is a registered trademark of Dolby Laboratories Ltd.

makes it through that legal minefield, cable will have an inexpensive service that satellite can't match

TITANS OF THE BLOOD

As if consumers didn't get weary of the first battle between global technology companies who couldn't agree on protocols and formats, now the companies have done it again.

Nobody but a few eggheads really cared 30 years ago whether VHS or Betamax reigned supreme. Everyone just wanted the battle to end so that buyers could have some confidence that whichever technology they chose would remain current for a year or two.

Consumers feel the same way about the current tussle between Blu-Ray and HD DVD. They don't give a pixel whether one becomes the more dominant technology for storing high-definition video and other digital data. All they really want is a technology that works and that won't end up in the basement behind the K-Tel records and the Abdominizer the day after they buy it.

While the techies and pitchmen slug it out, however, you have to choose. Here's a brief explanation of how the technologies work to help you along the way.

Blu-ray Disc (BD)

An optical-disc format for storing high-definition video and high-density data, the Blu-ray standard was developed by a group of consumer electronics and PC companies such as Hitachi Ltd., LG Electronics Inc., Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd., Pioneer Corporation, Rpyal Philips Electronics, Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd., Sharp Corporation, Sony Corporation and Thomson multimedia. Together they called themselves the "Blu-ray Disc Founders" and created a secret handshake.

Conventional DVDs use a red laser to store information. Blu-ray relies on a shorter-wavelength blue laser, which allows it to store substantially more data more densely on the disc, increasing storage capacity by about three times compared to that of red-laser technology. (For the really technical explanation, check with the MIT-Harvard Center for Ultracold Atoms.)

Compared to its main competitor, the HD DVD format, Blu-ray can accommodate more information but may be more expensive to support in the initial stages. A single-layer Blu-ray Disc can be used to record more than two hours of HDTV or more than 13 hours of standard TV.

In addition to higher cost, drawbacks include an inability to play a Blu-ray disc on a conventional DVD player because their red lasers can't read the fine print that blue lasers can.

High-Definition Digital Versatile Disc (HD DVD)

Similar to the Blu-ray Disc, HD DVD uses the same CD-sized optical data storage media and the same shorter-wavelength blue laser. The big difference lies in the plastic section of the disc that is read by the laser. In the Blu-ray format, the disc is 0.1mm thick. In the HD DVD format, it's 0.6mm. (And you thought arguing over the remote was childish and petty.)

HD DVD is promoted by Toshiba, NEC, Sanyo and, more recently, Microsoft and Intel and is backed by several Hollywood studios, although most studios have hedged their bets and backed both technologies.

HD DVD players connect to HDTV sets through a High Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI). To watch high-definition movies, you must have an HDMI input on your HDTV.

Because HD DVD evolved directly from current DVD technology, it has been relatively easy and inexpensive to bring to market and, at about $750 to $1,000, costs about half as much as Blu-Ray technology.

THE BIG SCREEN

If you lived in most countries, you might get excited when you read about the latest TVs developed by companies like Sanyo, LG Electronics and Toshiba. Incorporating digital recording devices, superlative sound systems and HD connectors, these devices eliminate the clutter and maximize the versatility of your TV set.

A new TV from Sanyo, for example, comes with a built-in 160-GB hard drive and a digital terrestrial television tuner that enables consumers to receive digital programming through an antenna.

LG Electronics has developed flat-panel high-definition television sets with integrated PVR equipped with a 160-GB hard drive that "creates a one-hour buffer that is always recording so that the user can pause and rewind live TV at any time," according to Stuff Magazine. "This may be a trend in the future," adds Robert Gumiela, senior marketing director for Toshiba of Canada's consumer electronics group, who says these units may also help to resolve the copyright issues that currently keep PVR technology wrapped in red tape.

Scientific-Atlanta, a global supplier of high-definition technologies, has demonstrated a PVR-equipped set-top box linked to a wireless mobile phone, which enables you to program a PVR in the home remotely and possibly deliver content stored on the set-top box to the mobile phone. Motorola has manufactured a similar configuration of devices although with a slightly different approach.

Whether Canadians ever use one of these gizmos will depend on several factors. Canadian broadcasting regulations, licensing agreements between broadcasters, content suppliers and cable and satellite companies, huge investments in technology and the desire of consumers to add yet another layer of complexity to their hours of leisure.

And flights to Pluto leave next year. ■



'LAW ENFORCEMENT IS A RISKY BUSINESS, BU GENERALLY THE THREATS THAT YOU ANTICIPATE ARE FROM OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION, NOT FRM WITHIN'—EDMONTON'S INSP. BRYAN BOULANGER

PETER MUNK AND CLIVE BEDDOE

IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE AND GIVE

An unofficial contest for Canadian philanthropist of the year was hatched last week when two of the country's most prominent businessmen each announced multi million-dollar charity donations **Peter Munk** (bottom), founder of Barrick Gold, revealed he'll give more than $25 million to the Toronto General Hospital—the largest offering ever to a Canadian hospital, and Munk's second contribution (In 1997, he ponied up $6 million to create the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre in honour of his heart disease afflicted father, grandfather and uncle.) Meanwhile, WestJest CEO **Clive Beddoe** (above) declared a $10-million charity donation on behalf of his company (The recipient is as yet unannounced.) That benevolence, however, was born out of less touching circumstances: it is part of a gritty corporate settlement of a lawsuit launched by rival Air Canada.

DARYL HANNAH

POWERED BY FRENCH-FRY OIL AND PURE HEART

She was a renegade robot in the dystopian classic *Blade Runner*, in which she plunged her hand into roiling water to retrieve a hard-boiled egg. In *Splash*, the 1984 **Ron Howard** comedy, she was a mermaid who choked back lobster, shell and all. But **Daryl Hannah** was playing herself recently when, at a gas pump, she filled a glass tumbler and threw back a gulp. The golden, honey viscous stuff wasn't fossil fuel—it was the same french fry grease that powers her 1983 biodiesel El Camino. It has a level of toxicity "somewhere between table salt and maple syrup," Hannah, 45, tells the camera. The scene forms part of her new videoblog, at *www.dhlovelife.com*, promoting biodiesel and other environmental causes. The blog is typical for Hannah: a long-time vegetarian, she spent her off-camera moments on *Splash* crying over those dead lobsters, which director Howard had stuffed with potatoes in deference to her diet.

JIMMY HOFFA

TALK ABOUT REST IN PEACE

Thirty-one years later, the location of his remains remains a mystery. An end zone at Giants Stadium. The pavement of a New Jersey turnpike. A landfill in Staten Island. All were rumoured, at one time or another, to be the final resting place of former Teamsters boss **Jimmy Hoffa**, who disappeared in the summer of 1975, the victim of an alleged Mafia hit. Last week, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation crossed another suspected gravesite off its list: a horse farm in suburban Detroit. Acting on a tip, agents and archaeologists spent days digging through the dirt where a barn once stood, but their search turned up no trace of the infamous union boss. All that was left on the property was a huge hole—and a fresh batch of material for America's late-night comics. Quipped **Conan O'Brien**, "Officials say it's the first time they've ever been to Detroit and not found a body."

BATWOMAN

HOLY NEW SLANT ON A COMIC BOOK HEROINE!

Does she know if there's a gay ghetto in Gotham City? Does her bat sense interfere with her gaydar? And what does she *really* think of those leathery outfits and stiletto heels? Recent revelations that **Batwoman**, a.k.a. comic book heroine Kathy Kane, is gay—nay, a "lipstick lesbian"—have the chattering classes of comic book fandom all atwitter. "The odds of you seeing Kathy actually kissing other women anywhere other than on the cheek are pretty slim," predicts one blogger. "Anything's better" than the original, counters another. "Batman was always telling her to go home and have kids." That's a no-go for the latest incarnation of the classic crime fighter whose character debuted in 1956 and was killed off in 1979. When she returns this summer in DC's 52 comic book series as a high society dame, Kathy will have a different backstory. According to Dan DiDio, DC's vice-president and executive editor, the new Bat's sexual past will include a fling with a female police detective. Holy conflict of interest!

ADRIAN WYLD/CP

ROY DUPUIS

ANOTHER KICK AT KIGALI

Quebec's **Roy Dupuis** scored a box office hit in his home province playing hockey legend **Maurice Richard** in *The Rocket*. Now he's set to play another real-life Canadian hero—Lt.-Gen. **Romeo Dallaire**. Dupuis stars in a movie based on *Shake Hands with the Devil*, Dallaire's memoir of his thwarted attempt to stop the 1994 Rwandan genocide as commander of a UN peacekeeping force. With Ottawa-born director Roger Spottiswoode (*Tomorrow Never Dies*) and Halifax producer Michael Donovan (*Bowling for Columbine*), this month Dupuis will begin an 18 week shoot in the Rwandan capital of Kigali. Spottiswoode says his film tells a different story than the Oscar-nominated *Hotel Rwanda*, which has been criticized for inaccuracy. "It takes place in the same world," he says, "but it doesn't step on the toes of *Hotel Rwanda*. It's much more about the politics and the UN peacekeepers. Dallaire is a fascinating character who stands in for all of us. He was a military man who had to disobey orders, who said, 'I'm staying in Rwanda.'"

DAVID BOILY/CP KAZBEK VAKHAYEV/AP SERGEI UZAKOV/ITAR TASS EDMONTON SUN/CP TELUS/CP

ZAMIRA DZHABRAILOVA

BEAUTY QUEEN ON A 'PODIUM OF DISGRACE'

She may be the only girl in Grozny with her own set of foreign wheels, but it remains to be seen just what 15-year old **Zamira Dzhabrailova** will be allowed to do with her brand new Toyota. She won the sedan in Chechnya's first beauty pageant since 1988, an event promoted by the government as evidence that the war-ravaged republic is entering a more peaceful time, although the contest inspired many angry denunciations of its "podium of disgrace" from religious Chechens. Contestants were judged on their cooking, folk dancing and conversation (there was no swimsuit competition). While Chechen Prime Minister **Ramzan Kadyrov** has endorsed headscarves for some women, he had another take on girls like Dzhabrailova. "About skirts, if she's got good legs, then a bit shorter. But if she's got bad legs, best to have a long skirt."

BRYAN BOULANGER

OILERS WIN, POLICE COMMANDER LOSES

When the hockey revelry turned ugly two weeks ago on Edmonton's Whyte Avenue after the Oilers' win in the Western Conference final, crowd-control police commander Insp. **Bryan Boulanger**, 49, decided to exercise restraint: no batons, no water cannon, just a line of officers pushing the rowdy away from the downtown core. Last week, Boulanger found himself at odds with other cops who clearly thought he'd been too soft. Police association president Peter Ratcliff told *Maclean's* that Boulanger probably made the right call at the time, but there may be more violence as the Oilers hit the Stanley Cup finals this week. Boulanger's boss removed him from the crowd-control job. The inspector went public in protest, only to receive a gag order, which was then relaxed. Boulanger is still miffed. "Law enforcement is a risky business," he says, "but generally the threats that you anticipate are from outside the organization, not from within." Ouch.

HAZINA THE HIPPO

STILL ALONE IN A CONCRETE BUNKER

Hazina the hippo has been causing an uproar since 2004 when, as a yearling calf, she moved from her home in Granby, Que., to the Greater Vancouver Zoo in Aldergrove, B.C., a 120-acre facility with some 600 other animals. Her new digs—two 15-by-20-foot concrete stalls with an eight-by-eight-foot wading pool—outraged inspectors at the Vancouver humane society. Too small, they said. No access to the outdoors. No companions. No problem, said the zoo, we'll build her a better one. We'll get her a pal. But last week, despite the $12,000 Hazina earned for starring in a Telus ad last Christmas, she was still bunkered alone. On May 31, the B.C. SPCA announced that Crown counsel had laid charges against the zoo for causing and permitting distress. "Ridiculous," says the zoo's animal care manager Jamie Dorgan. Dorgan swears that Hazina's new pen is just weeks away from completion, in her future, as well, is a companion from the Denver Zoo. But Ana Bowie, a spokesperson for that zoo, says that after a site visit last spring, no hippo from Denver will be coming anytime soon.



Bravissimo!

Canada finally has a national opera house, complete with private boxes that will be the talk of society. BY BARBARA AMIEL

music

Just 139 years after Confederation, Canada will open its first national opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, in Toronto on June 14—in spite of all Canadian cultural policy initiatives. Finland beat us by 13 years. War-torn Vietnam reopened its magnificent French-built opera house in 1997 (and by 1999 had mounted a production of Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*—sung in Vietnamese). Even Iceland, population 296,737, has a dedicated home for its opera. In the civilized world, Canada is one of the last countries—if not the last—to create a home for its opera company, a dubious distinction.



RICHARD BRADSHAW of the COC

Opera rubs a lot of people the wrong way. Perhaps there is something intrinsically un-Canadian about it—though opera on ice is a thought. "Opera," said U.S. humorist Robert Benchley, "is when a guy gets stabbed in the back, and instead of bleeding, he sings." Opera is characters with impossible names—Nilakantha, Helmwige, Klytemnestra, King Ouf I, Baron Tabasco and his private secretary Tapioca—in situations that beggar the imagination, singing words that cannot possibly be understood, with seats costing the earth.

Rather odd then that Ben Heppner, Richard Margison and Michael Schade, arguably the world's best Wagner, Verdi and Mozart tenors, all call Canada home. Or that the opera world thinks of Canada the way the baseball world thinks of the Dominican Republic: overflowing with new talent like soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian (who also holds a University of Toronto honours degree in biomedical engineering), Adrianne Pieczonka, who will debut at Bayreuth this summer, and New Brunswick's stunning Measha Brueggergosman, ebony-skinned, sometimes pink-haired, and touted as the next Jessye Norman. Or that Toronto, a city imbued with a musical tradition of over 100 years of symphonic and choral work, was content to do without an opera house for so long. No law says a civilized city must have an opera house, but even so, the term has become a euphemism for a city having reached a level of cultural maturity.

Few people are neutral about opera. For opera lovers, the combination of orchestra and voice, when done well, evokes such shivering pleasure, such ecstasy and joy, that no vocabulary is available to explain it. For an opera hater, those suffering husbands dragged to performances for the social convenience of their wives, or teenagers forced to listen for their betterment, no vocabulary is sufficient to describe the agony.

In the bad old days, opera in Canada was relegated to hockey arenas. When New York's famed Metropolitan Opera came to Toronto in the 1950s, it played at Maple Leaf Gardens, a venue that could seat 15,000 people. I had seat number 14,999—the singers could have been hockey pucks for all I could see and hear. Later on, opera came to the O'Keefe Centre, 3,200 seats, and if you were once again in the cheap seats and watching Maureen Forrester wearing her Valkyrie outfit in Wagner's *Die Walküre*, all you could see, as she ascended to Valhalla, home of the gods, were her thighs. They were as formidable as her voice, but singing thighs are distracting.

Opera fans grumbled. Committees were formed to build a real opera house, usually with Toronto financier and philanthropist Hal Jackman heading them. In 1984, Ontario premier William G. Davis gave the COC some land in the heart of Toronto at Bay and Wellesley. Premier succeeded premier, political party succeeded political party. Nothing happened.

Meanwhile, in a little Valhalla of their own, situated somewhere between Toronto's Rosedale and Forest Hill, the opera committees, encouraged by one or two politicians who hummed Verdi in the shower, were spreading ambitious wings. They hired architect Moshe Safdie, who came up with a project costed at about $300 million (in 1989 dollars). The plans were marvellous, the Bay and Wellesley site was great, the parking would have been terrific and even the National Ballet of Canada—a company known for its pickiness—would have had enough rehearsal rooms to satisfy their needs. Unfortunately, in 1990, NDP premier Bob Rae, who had not yet become a Liberal, demanded impossible cuts.

Enter Richard Bradshaw, 62, the general director of the Canadian Opera Company. Difficult to miss him, if you go to the opera. The man has the requisite Franz Liszt mane of hair, suits as impeccably cut as those of former La Scala musical director Riccardo Muti, and a presence that dwarfs his divas. If he isn't conducting, he's watching the performance gimlet eyed from the sidelines.

Bradshaw has been a master strategist behind the creation of the Four Seasons Centre. Schmooze, seduce, grovel, bully, whatever the situation called for short of extortion and murder, Bradshaw has done it if a donation was in sight.

He arrived in Toronto in 1989, just in time to watch the fall of the opera house project. Born in Britain, he attended the mandatory first opera or concert that changes one's life; in Bradshaw's case, Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* when he was eight years old. He had his first musical job as a preteen—organ playing at the local church. After the Glyndebourne Opera Festival job every aspiring British musician needs, he received an offer from San Francisco in 1977 to be resident conductor. Bradshaw brought his new wife, Diana, to the New World.

The air is thin at the top of the conducting world. Ambitious, highly talented young conductors like Bradshaw look around and gauge what might be available: how old is the conductor of the symphony orchestra in Cleveland, Munich, Los Angeles, Berlin, New York, London? When the podiums are taken by relatively young men or held by musical giants, you are fortunate to get an offer like that of San Francisco. Fortune struck twice. In 1989, Brian Dickie, general director of the COC, who as general administrator of the Glyndebourne Festival Opera had offered Bradshaw

STEVEN EVANS (LEFT); MICHAEL COOPER

the job there, now invited him to Toronto to be conductor of the COC orchestra

Bradshaw's task was twofold. As conductor, he had to pull the orchestra together. Just how a conductor brings an orchestra to the world class level that the COC orchestra has reached today—"triumph spectacular" Richard Bradshaw conducts a taut, sinewy performance" raved the London *Times* when it played in 2002 at the Edinburgh International Festival—is one of those mysteries that reminds me of Rose Kennedy's answer to the question put to her in 1964 of what made her sons so charismatic. "If I knew," she said, a mite sarcastically, "I'd bottle it and sell it."

The relationship between Bradshaw and his orchestras is symbiotic. His unabashed championing of his players is mirrored by the support and protectiveness they have given him during those dark moments almost all great musicians have. Berlioz called them his "black philosophy," and Mahler, Chopin and many others have battled the exaltation and depression that seem to affect those people whom music takes to so high a point that coming down is a steep descent.

Meanwhile, *Carmen* may be great and Pavarotti made Puccini's *Turandot* famous with his 1990 recording of *Nessun dorma*, but in 1993, Bradshaw gambled on younger audiences responding to more cutting-edge stuff. He commissioned libretti from Robertson Davies and Margaret Atwood. Film directors Atom Egoyan and François Girard were given productions. It worked. François Girard's production of *Oedipus Rex with Symphony of Psalms*, designed by Michael Levine and presented at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival in 2002, was pronounced "dazzlingly spectacular," and the orchestra hailed by the *Independent* as "gold standard." Levine, a graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design, is now one of the world's most sought-after opera designers. He will design and direct *Das Rheingold* for the COC's Ring Cycle this autumn.

In 1994, when Bradshaw took over as artistic director, the COC was in long term care if not the intensive care unit. "Opera," explains John Fraser, master of Massey College, "was the dog in the Toronto scene. For years the symphony had been the focus of attention, from the glory days of Sir Ernest MacMillan [1931-56], through conductors Walter Susskind, Seiji Ozawa and Karel Ancerl. Then the emergence of prima ballerina Karen Kain, who in 1972 danced with Rudolf Nureyev in *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*, and the sensational 1974 defection of Kirov Ballet star Mikhail Baryshnikov in Toronto put ballet back on the agenda. The opera just crawled along."

The COC still had no home. All that remained of the debacle of the 1989 opera house were some condos at Bay and Wellesley mockingly called "Opera Place." But by the late nineties the mood was changing and Bradshaw was there—to be one of those "tipping" people Malcolm Gladwell describes in his best-selling book. Toronto had its Sky Dome, its convention centres, Roy Thomson Hall. The time was right to push for an opera house again. In 2002, the provincial government donated land on Queen Street, the federal government gave a grant of $25 million, and the COC board committed a further $13 million. That left more than $100 million to be raised.

Bradshaw planned his assault. The Canada to which he had arrived was still reaping the whirlwind of the sixties. The heady days of hippiedom led to the egalitarian vocabulary of the '70s and then to theories of political correctness that became the mother's milk of the nineties. "Diversity" was more than a descriptive noun—it was a shibboleth. Elitism was akin to Satanism in the minds of the guardians of Canadian culture. None of this would have been immediately apparent in 2002 to Bradshaw, who simply thought it was time Toronto had an opera house.

Bradshaw had been nurtured in the European arts scene where governments funded opera as a matter of course—and for reasons of political survival. Let La Scala or the Munich opera house die and a government might as well resign. In a speech in October 2004 in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre, Bradshaw listed some of the statistics. "The Danish state subsidy to the arts is six times that of the federal subsidy in Canada. The annual subsidy in Berlin to opera alone will be $215 million plus an immediate $40-million lifeline. The Canada Council's budgets for all the arts in Canada was $142 million in 2002-03—little more than half of what is being invested in opera alone in Berlin."

But Ottawa felt its largesse was amply demonstrated with its one-time gift of $25 million. The government funds the arts through the Heritage Ministry. The arts policy of Canadian Heritage emphasizes "Excellence and diversity in creativity" as its first goal with "specific priorities," namely "aboriginal artists and arts organizations... artists and arts organizations from diverse regions, culturally diverse communities" and other politically correct notions having little to do with the arts. These objectives are more or less echoed by the Canada Council. When the council announced a bonus of more than $550 million to the arts in 2004, scarcely a penny of it found its way to the opera. Bradshaw fought back. "You certainly won't build a cultural renaissance by being cravenly politically correct," he told the Canadian Club in 2004.

An unsympathetic attitude to the opera is not a monopoly of the Liberals and the NDP. If those two are tangled up in the cult of multicult and PC, the Conservatives have their own pinched approach. Heritage Minister Bev Oda displayed a big dose of it in the 2006 budget debate. "Spending on arts and culture," she said, "must be focused and generate clear results." Unfortunately, unlike household or business budgets, the arts rarely produce "clear results." The day after the budget, Bradshaw was in a slough of despond. When told that Prime Minister Stephen Harper was in fact something of an intellectual, he looked fractionally cheered. "But does he understand the role of culture in the spirit and life of a country?" he asked.

The big beef against opera is that it is elitist (which may explain why the left-wing Toronto city council has not offered the new opera house one penny). But elitist in what sense? Opera lovers in Canada cut across all ages, incomes, creeds, ethnicities and races. Graduates of the COC's Ensemble Studio include young Canadian singers not only from Europe but Russia, Lebanon, Israel, Korea, Hong Kong and South America. Under Bradshaw, the percentage of young people attending has sharply increased. Forty per cent of his non-subscription audience for Atom Egoyan's *Salome* was under 30, 48 per cent for the 2003-04 production of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes*; 39 per cent for Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*.

THE WASHROOMS WENT FOR $50,000-$100,000

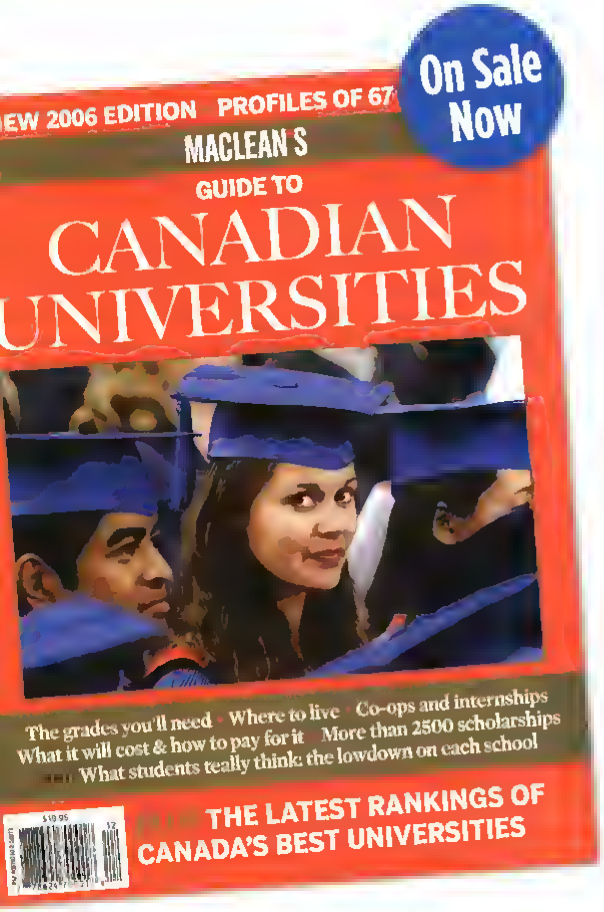


THE COC'S production of *Siegfried*, 2005

MICHAEL COOPER



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The current model for funding the arts in Canada reflects the view of the "Canadian equity worker/academic" (whatever such a unicorn may be) quoted in a paper delivered to the 2003 Canadian Heritage Forum on diversity and culture: "I pay taxes and I do not go to see cultural productions at Roy Thomson Hall or the Canadian Opera Company, yet they receive tax money and grants and those productions I prefer to see get minimal if any support through tax dollars... our sense of Canadian culture must change and not rely upon the clear assumption that it is an Anglo/Euro centric value system and hierarchy" An opera-supporting taxpayer could, of course, have responded that modern life is so arranged that we all end up subsidizing the policies we are passionately against—such as forums on diversity and culture. That's our system.

With the land and federal funding in hand, the next question was the opera house design. Ten architects submitted proposals; the choice fell to the Toronto firm of Diamond + Schmitt.

No single art form in the last decade has gripped the popular imagination as intensely as architecture. Architecture is what caused Italy's Vittorio Sgarbi, a former deputy minister of culture, to reportedly threaten to dynamite Richard Meier's new pavilion in Rome last April, when it opened to house Augustus's 2,000 year-old "altar of peace." Rather than blow up the building, the ex-minister had to settle for simply setting fire to an effigy of it. In 1984, Prince Charles called a proposed development in the heart of the City of London "a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much loved and elegant friend." All the arguments about traditionalism versus modernism dating back to the Bauhaus battles of the 1920s are with us again.

Jack Diamond is an erudite and cultivated man who obtained an Oxford graduate degree in politics, philosophy and economics. His twin passions are music and architecture. He has little patience with what he describes as "the superficial novelty of so-called iconic or trophy architecture" (read Frank Gehry and Daniel Libeskind) and has a deep commitment to the "social, physical, political and economic" aspects of a project. The outside walls of the opera house whose white and iridescent black palette was chosen, he explains, "to pick up the environment," change from white to silver to gold as they pick up reflected light.

Diamond's architecture is marked by its lack of flamboyance. For him, function takes precedence over form—following in the tradition of Bauhaus modernism. "Architecture," says his website, "shaped by the life within it and by the life around it." His Four Seasons opera house makes performers and audience the stars of the building rather than the building itself. Sheets of absolutely transparent and completely soundproof low iron glass dominate two sides of the building, including the City Room where audiences will mingle at intermissions. The effect is spectacular as the lit exterior reveals the play of figures moving through the rooms and going up and down the glass staircase floating between floors. To create such an effect on both so small a budget and footprint is an architectural miracle.



'TURNING A PROGRAM PAGE MAKES A NOISE'

MICHAEL COOPER

EGOYAN'S *Salome* (left); *Peter Grimes*, 2003

Still, critics of the opera house find the plainness of the exterior unexciting, even grim. They see the flatness of the roofline as the ugly side of modernism. There are no sexy curves to the building. The auditorium is a horseshoe in the tradition of all great European opera houses, with a grand tier made up of individual boxes, some having private foyers where coats can be hung, but that is where the resemblance to the opera houses of Vienna, London and Milan ends. There is no velvet or gilt. Even the hooks for coats are stainless steel pegs rather than voluptuous curves.

The triumph of the house is Diamond's deep honey-coloured auditorium with its superb acoustics and sightlines. Though it is directly next to a subway line and busy city traffic, the auditorium is a completely independent structure, ingentously buffered from noise by a rim of steel and almost 500 shock-absorbent rubber pads. The highest row in the house has a perfect view of the stage. "Audiences will have to re-educate themselves," said Matthew Lella of Diamond's firm. "The total silence means the turning of a program page makes a noise."

The campaign kickoff came from Toronto's Isadore Sharp, who in 2003 promised $20 million to have the house named after his luxury Four Seasons Hotels chain. His 2003 agreement was for the naming opportunity only. The tree logo of the Four Seasons would go on the donor board inside the house. But by 2006, Sharp had a rethink and wanted more for his shareholders. "Who knows what the Lincoln Center commemorates," he said. He told the COC he wanted the Four Seasons tree logo placed high up on three sides of the building.

Jack Diamond was strongly opposed, if not apoplectic. The notion of the house as a corporate brand—probably the first branded opera house in the world—was not a first either he or Bradshaw wanted. Others murmured about the gods in Wagner's Ring Cycle moving into a Four Seasons hotel instead of Valhalla, with Brünnhilde confined to a one-bedroom junior suite. Sharp wanted maximum value for his $20 million, and had the blunt weapon of his pledge of instalments to be completed after the opening of the house. He settled good naturedly on a compromise of one illuminated tree on the outside front wall of the house only.

After Sharp's jump-start, the remainder of the money had to be raised. The fundraisers turned beagle eyes on the house for naming opportunities. A seat—$10,000. Getting your name on the donor wall—$25,000 and up. A box—$1 million. The President's Council and Sponsor's Lounge went to Hal Jackman for $5 million. The Royal Box on the Grand Ring in the R. Fraser Elliott Hall went for $7 million after a combined donation from the Meighen Foundation and the late Mrs. E. Louise Morgan. Seasoned philanthropists were courted. Labatts, Rotmans and Tanenbaums, who responded with seven-figure plus donations. The Leslie Dans gave $2 million, the Milton Harnises $2.5 million. The COC staff and artists passed the hat and donated more than $208,000. The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)

local 5% donated $50,000. Even the COC board of directors upped its original pledge of $13 million to $22.6 million.

"We didn't originally have the washrooms on the naming list," explained Wendy McDowell, the capital campaign director, "but people kept asking about it." The washrooms went for $50,000-$100,000, the first one being snapped up by an opera lover who has been unwell. "Two friends" sponsored the ladies' on the Grand Ring floor. The Ellen Jean Hellyer Powder Room was named in honour of the late Mrs. Hellyer by her family. No plans to name each toilet, but one sensed that if need be....

Philanthropy aside, opera still has the social oomph of no other enterprise—strange, since opera has never been exclusive. When real opera emerged in the 17th century, it was popular recreation and Mozart was definitely for the masses. Still, the notion of the best people being "seen" at the opera has always stuck.

Contemporary theatres in Canada like Roy Thomson Hall carefully shied away from private boxes in favour of mass seating. It was baseball's SkyDome, for heaven's sake, that imitated Europe's opera boxes. Now, in that endearing Canadian manner, our opera is imitating baseball and the ubiquitous and expensive European box is back.

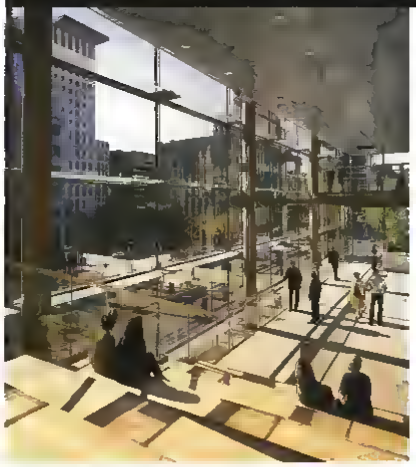
What this will do to Toronto's social scene is no mystery. Box seats will be, unambiguously, the place to be seen. Culture will make it okay to display the pecking order so antithetical to the Canadian way of things—but oh so very human. Boxes go from B to X, with the Royal Box (N) as the numero uno in terms of prestige, while its 12 seats will be on public sale, donors like Izzy Sharp will have a ration of tickets for themselves.

Richard Bradshaw's box (F) will have a special éclat for music lovers and, after a while, Torontonians will become familiar with whose name is attached to which box. For starters, box G is music philanthropist Roger D. Moore, with the Dans in E and Masonite International Corp. in U. Couples in love will adore boxes W and C, which hold only two people. The sound is probably better higher up and orchestra seats are better for close viewing, but for socialites it will be no contest. The blessed quality of the box is that the seats are movable for the long-legged, while bored husbands can slip away after the curtain goes up or have a double whisky in the box's vestibule and sleep through the whole evening.

When the ribbon is cut on June 11 and the fundraising gala concert held, the less glam work of getting more money for operating costs will continue. With characteristic bravado, Bradshaw has chosen to open the new house with a complete production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (followed by a full season of Verdi, Strauss and Mozart). The four separate operas are performed on sequential nights: *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Gotterdammerung*—three of which are over four hours long plus intermissions. For those unfamiliar with the intricacies of Wagner's Ring Cycle, based on Nordic legends, a description of the relationship of its hero, Siegfried, to other characters in the operas may be instructive. Richard Wagner's great-grand daughter, Nike Wagner, and the father-in-law of the woman whose father is the father-in-law of his son. Brünnhilde is the daughter-in-law...." Incest is complicated.

Wagner lovers will travel anywhere for a new Ring. Wagner's own opera house, the Festspiele in Bayreuth, received 492,000 ticket requests this year, nine times the 53,900 seats available. Eventually, Bradshaw hopes to make the Four Seasons Centre one of the must houses both for singers and Wagner lovers. Meanwhile, the singers who can perform Wagner are few in number and command high fees.

COUPLES IN LOVE WILL ADORE BOXES W AND C



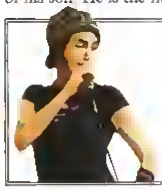
AERIAL AMPHITHEATRE in the new centre's City Room

But as the opening notes of Wagner's score resonate in the Four Seasons' auditorium this autumn, that Dionysian music of so passionate an intensity that one's very essence is laid bare and vulnerable to the gods, Canada will add more than a notch to its stature. The Four Seasons Centre—all its glass and brick and wood—may not last over hundreds of years, but its "being" will.

The culture of a country, after all, outlives buildings and the people in them. Ozymandian forces reduce everything to dust except the spirit and values that infuse a civilization. On June 14, Canadian opera star Ben Heppner will perform at the opening concert. The crowds in their long dresses in the new opera house, and the masses of people outside in Nathan Phillips Square listening and watching the concert for free on a huge screen erected for the occasion, will be as one, beginning a new chapter in Canada's cultural legacy. "This is how Canada can be," said Bradshaw. After the performance, Bradshaw, Heppner, Pieczonka and others will go over to Nathan Phillips Square to join the party. It took an Englishman to create this dream. It will take Canadians—and their government—to keep it alive. M

quotes an earnest critic writing in 1920 in Berlin's theatre journal *Die Schaunbuhne*:

"Siegfried is the son of his uncle and the nephew of his mother. He is his own cousin, as the nephew and son of his aunt. He is the nephew of his wife, and therefore his own uncle and his own nephew by marriage. He is nephew and uncle in one. He is the son-in-law of his grandfather Wotan, the brother-in-law of his aunt, who is at the same time his mother. Siegmund is the father-in-law of his sister Brünnhilde and the brother-in-law of his son. He is the husband of his sister



KINNIE STARR...HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

Just move like you're in a groove or e deep valley / Prove you're someone that the world needs medly / Heat the heart of everything near you / Be who you are shine like you do / Aboriginal I'm speaking directly to you / Full blood quarter third or sixteenth / Rez folk city folk blue eyes brown or green / Caucasian features or cheekbones that cut glass / Ignite the future joined by the past—from *Rock the Boat*, off Starr's new album, *Anything*

STEVEN EVANS



IN THIS LOPSIDED romantic comedy, Vaughn hogs all the best lines, and Aniston lets him steamroll her into weepy submission

Breaking up is hard to watch

As she strikes out, yet again, Jen proves she's the victim of another Hollywood mismatch

BY BRIAN D. JOHNSON

After Cannes, it's sobering to be back in the popcorn mills. Cannes is a parallel universe where art trumps commerce—and where we saw more powerful female performances in two weeks than in six months at the multiplex. One movie alone, Pedro Almodovar's *Volver*, boasted three generations of remarkable women, led by Penélope Cruz dividing and conquering with her cleavage like a latter day Sophia Loren. What a grim awakening to come home to poor, sad Jennifer Aniston, an actress who seems diminished by her own celebrity. Aniston is a movie star everywhere except where it counts: onscreen.

Her own story keeps eclipsing her work. By now, we know it all too well. After being ditched by Brad Pitt in the most famous Hollywood breakup since Liz and Dick, she received a massive sympathy card from the media. Jen was the decent girl next door, with fine bones and modest features. Angelina was the coarse, pillow-lipped vixen with a taste for knives and tattoos. The morality tale was set in motion, and Jen was cast as the survivor who would pull herself together with the whole world watching.

We're still waiting. After striking out with starring roles in three abysmal movies—*Derailed*, *Rumor Has It*, and now *The Break-Up*, she has pushed our sympathies to the limit. You might say she's just the victim of bad scripts. But that only makes it worse, as her victim roles on- and off-screen converge.

Miscast as a femme fatale in *Derailed*, Aniston struggled for credibility in a role Angelina Jolie could have played in her sleep. In *Rumor Has It*, a misbegotten sequel to *The Graduate*, she humiliated herself as a woman who cheats on the perfect guy (Mark Ruffalo) by falling for a rich cad who could be her father (Kevin Costner). An indie detour, *Friends With Money*, offered a smarter script, but Aniston sounded the one sour note in the ensemble—as a jilted lover slumming as a housemaid who surrenders to cheeseball men while mooning over her ex.

In *The Break-Up*, art and life align with fearful symmetry. Aniston shot the movie in the aftermath of her own breakup. And, mimicking the way Brad and Angelina sparked their romance by playing warring spouses in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, Aniston became linked to Vince Vaughn, her onscreen antagonist. But in their breakup movie, Pitt and Jolie were evenly matched. In this lopsided romantic comedy, Aniston lets Vaughn steamroll her into weepy submission. He also hogs all the wittiest dialogue, leaving her the sentimental dregs of a ridiculous script that sends sexual politics back to the Stone Age.

But then, it's his movie. Vaughn helped produce the film, and its screenwriters spent months skimming dialogue from his improvisations. One of them, Jay Lavender, says, "There isn't a part of this movie that Vince hasn't put his stamp on." No kidding. Vaughn is a funny guy, and an amiable actor. He was a riot in *Wedding Crashers*. But unchecked, his charm curdles from sheer vanity.

Vaughn plays Gary, a blue-collar bozo with a heart of gold. After a hard day of performing schtick as a Chicago tour-bus guide, he just wants to crack a beer, watch sports and play video games. Aniston plays Brooke, his humourless spouse, who works at a posh art gallery. Losing her patience, she turns into a whining nag who begs him to do the dishes, take her to the ballet and know what she wants without asking. Worse still, she has a family of fruity in-laws who sing a cappella over dinner. The breakup is her idea: she hopes it will jolt him into loving her. She's the *Cosmo* cliché of the pre-feminist wife.

You watch this movie, shake your head and think unfair thoughts: if art is indeed imitating life, no wonder Brad ditched her. Aniston and Vaughn seem so completely mismatched you wonder how they could ever begin a relationship, never mind end one.

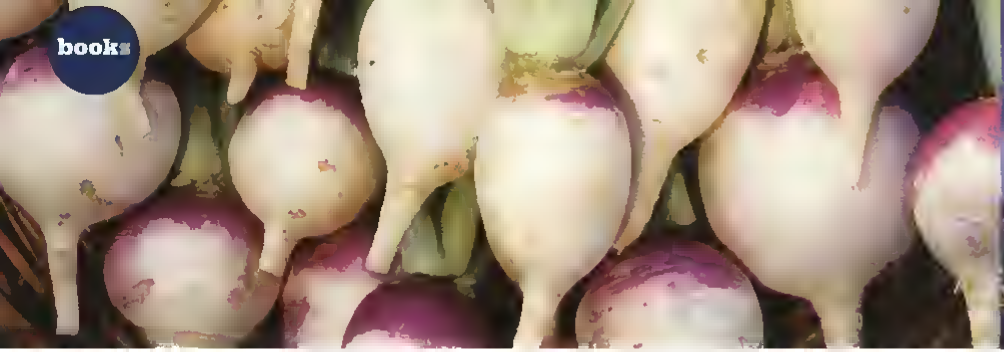
Movie stars are born, not made. They're larger-than-life creatures who fight up under the lens. Pitt is one; so is Vaughn, on a lesser scale. They always play the same person. Aniston is a character actor miscast as a movie star. She found a comfort zone in *Friends*. But on the big screen, she has an extraordinary talent for acting like she's not there. You try to find a way into those narrow eyes, and they seem to be off somewhere else. Perhaps dreaming of the day when she and Vince can retreat from the paparazzi fray and find a pocket of calm in some gated African country. A movie they can call their own. M



WE'RE STALKING...ANGELINA JOLIE

In her first public maternal act toward her newborn daughter, the actress registered domain names *ShilohNouvelJoliePitt.com* and *ShilohJoliePitt.com* on her baby's birthday. Jolie's lawyers also snared the .net, .org and .info extensions, but failed to secure the .biz and .us versions, which were snapped up by speculators hours after the birth was announced. Jolie's registrations did not include father Brad Pitt, indicating one less battle should Brangelina split.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS



HARRY TRUMAN was a political underdog until his riff about a 'do-nothing Congress' and Missouri's 'Turnip Day' touched a nerve



POLITICS TODAY is like Paris's Pompidou Centre: the plumbing's all on the outside

Even turnips wouldn't help Bush

A new book says politicians need more Harry Truman 'Turnip Day' moments. It's wrong.

BY MARK STEYN

I love this thing about Stephen Harper being too (dread word) "presidential." Tony Blair gets accused of the same thing. It's usually over stylistic tics. "God bless Canada," in the case of Scary Stephen, the Rose Garden type lectern Blair started using to make stand-up statements from the pavement in Downing Street.

Arthur Haberman, the big history prof at York University, says the American President has "a power and deference unknown and inappropriate to parliamentary governments." In fact, the president of the United States has far less power than a prime minister under the Westminster system. The presidency is a rejection of the excessive powers of the Crown, the prime minister is the latter day wielder of the excessive powers of the Crown. To be sure, there are regional variations: unlike Blair, Harper can't appoint Anglican bishops. But the Labour Prime Minister was able to abolish the old House of Lords and replace it with what's more or less a Canadian Senate stuffed with his cronies. If Bill Clinton had been able to do that with his upper house, there would never have been an impeachment trial. Bush can bomb Iraq and France, but his power over Vermont or South Dakota is far more circumscribed.

So the complaints about "presidential" PMs are less constitutional than tonal: they seem a bit too full of themselves when they're getting out of the limousine. That's also a bit of a stretch (the argument, not the limo). I'm not unsympathetic to the notion that a minister of the Crown should be a dull old stick with zero charisma, but, given what we now expect from government, unassuming non entities hardly seem the type to be attracted to the job. Watch those little vox pop moments they broadcast before an election debate, from alleged ordinary members of the public. "I really want to hear what he's going to do about health care/child care/the global environment/AIDS in Africa/racism/college tuition costs/my pension/the price of oil." When critics scoff that Tony Blair has become "messianic," why wouldn't he be?

Even Americans are sniffy about Americanized politics. Joe Klein has a lovely book out called *Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized By People Who Think You're Stupid*. The title makes it sound like just another of those full length whines by Democrat losers anxious to attribute the voters' antipathy to them to various malign forces. But, in fact, Klein's book is a beautifully written meditation on politicians and authenticity. His big image is the "Turnip Day" moment—a reference to Harry Truman's speech at the 1948 Democratic convention. Truman was widely considered to have been just minding the store since FDR died. Thomas Dewey was expected to win the election, and Truman's own party had split three ways, with Henry Wallace running as the darling of the left, and Strom Thurmond siphoning off the segregationist south on the Dixiecrat ticket. So the little haberdasher comes out and, in terrible circumstances, accepts the nomination—without a prepared speech. Instead, he riffs about the "do nothing Congress" and, in the course of so doing, says, "On the 26th of July, which out in Missouri we call Turnip Day, I am going to call Congress back and ask them to pass laws" to do this, that and the other.

Klein adores "Turnip Day," even though Truman actually got the date wrong (the Missouri adage runs "On the 25th of July / Sow your turnips wet or dry"). But he was improvising. The political consultant Bob Shrum says of the cracker-barrel speaking style that Truman "never sang, but goddamnit his offkeyness touched people." And that's really all Klein's looking for: an authentic Turnip Day moment. Some clue that there's someone real down in there.

Half a century later, when Bob Dole accepted the nomination at the '96 Republican convention, the newspapers were full of profiles of his speechwriter, the novelist Mark Helprin. Politics today is like the Pompidou Centre in Paris: the plumbing's all on the outside. So, in a perfect distillation of the postmodern campaign, pundits discussed how effective Helprin had been in recreating Dole as an authentic human being, by putting in lots of pseudo Turnip moments about the senator's supposedly beloved small town in Kansas, the grain elevator and so forth. Dole lives at the Watergate Building, he's not a small-town boy, he's the ultimate Beltway insider. He has a dark sardonic wit. Hiring a professional writer to reinvent him as Mister Grain Elevator was a disaster. About the only thing he does well is mordant one-liners. Everything else he muffs: he mangles the scripted folksiness and the rest comes out in impenetrable Senatese. Dole gets a passing mention in *Politics Lost* when Klein accompanies him to a middle school. A young girl asks him what he plans to do about acid rain and he replies, "That bill's in markup." Inspirational.

Klein's book is full of telling anecdotes. He's an old-school Democrat and he doesn't really get the Republican party or conservatism, and his efforts at even handedness mostly stop at a sneaky admiration for Republicans who are authentically mean. He's partial to Nixonian snarling, impressed at the way Roger Ailes (latterly the presiding genius at Fox) liked to let anti-Vietnam protesters into GOP campaign events to bait Tricky Dick because it made for better TV when Nixon took them on and demolished them. In fact, Dick emerges as remarkably unTricky. In 1968, he writes his own TV spots, memorizes them without a TelePrompTer, and in one studio session improvises an ad about a New York teachers' strike off the top of his head—evidently to his satisfaction: as he remarks afterwards, "Yep, this hits it right on the nose. It's all about law and order, and the damn Negro-Puerto Rican groups out there."

But the reason I started thinking about Harper and Blair and "presidential" prime ministers is because, in the end, sobering laugh riot though it is, I think Klein's book is barking up the wrong tree. What does he want in a politician? He tells us pretty much on page one: he wants Robert Kennedy on the night of Martin Luther King's assassination. Kennedy spoke that evening at a park in a poor part of Indianapolis, to a black crowd who didn't yet know that King was dead. He spoke for five minutes, about King, about his brother, a quote from Aeschylus, very dignified, sincere, heartfelt. And Klein recreates the moment very vividly, as both a "sublime example of the substance and music of politics in its grandest form" and "the end of an era: the last moments before American political life was overwhelmed by marketing professionals, consultants, and pollsters."

Oh, come on. Look, it was a fine speech. But it was given by a scion of Democratic party royalty and the heir to a slain president in the wake of the murder of another iconic figure. How much general application does it have? Let's say my brother was assassinated early in his premiership and a couple of years later, just before a campaign stop in a potentially hostile part of the Gaspe, I hear another beloved Canadian—I dunno, Don Cherry, Margaret Atwood—has been cut down in his or her prime. I would hope to be able to rise to the occasion. But, if that's the standard, if those are the necessary preconditions, my campaign for town council is pretty much doomed. And so are 99.99 per cent of political campaigns in the Western world.

Klein's missing the point. The same media that bemoan Harper and Blair's presidentialisms are the same media congenitally unable to focus on anything but horse-race personality politics. Fleet Street is particularly grim in this respect. But it's surprising to see as shrewd an analyst as Joe Klein make a rather more elegant version of the same mistake. For all that he bemoans the blandness of consultant-controlled candidates, one would hardly say that was the abiding sin of the present crowd. Republican senators like Trent Lott can barely disguise their contempt for their own base; Democrat leaders like Nancy Pelosi recycle the kookiest talking points of left-wing nut sites; Al Gore is predicting the Apocalypse not just for earth but for the rest of the universe—and he's never gotten better notices. The son of Klein's hero, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has just written a piece claiming that Bush stole the 2004 election. Gruesome as all the preceding may be, inauthenticity would seem to be the least of it. If anything, it's somewhat excessive on the authentic front.

If you think politics is about great men, you're bound to be disappointed—at least in a democracy. The present disenchantment south of the border arises in part because in Washington the alleged greatness of the "great men" has become entirely unmoored from the great questions of the day. It's like watching a sporting fixture where you can no longer tell what game they're playing. Seeming "presidential" and having a "Turnip Day" moment are fine and dandy, but at this moment a great man is only as great as his sense of the times. M

DEREK CROUCHER/CORBIS

ROY MORSCH/CORBIS

MACLEAN'S BESTSELLERS

COMPILED BY BRIAN BETHUNE

Fiction

		LAST WEEK (WEEKS ON LIST)
1	SUITE FRANÇAISE by Irène Némirovsky	3 (8)
2	JPOD by Douglas Coupland	5 (3)
3.	BOOK OF LONGING by Leonard Cohen	1 (5)
4	BLUE SHOES AND HAPPINESS by Alexander McCall Smith	2 (6)
5.	PIECE OF MY HEART by Peter Robinson	4 (3)
6	THEFT by Peter Carey	(1)
7	THE BIRTH HOUSE by Ami McKay	6 (12)
8	CERTAINTY by Madeleine Thien	9 (6)
9	EVERYMAN by Philip Roth	10 (5)
10	IN THE COMPANY OF THE COURTESAN by Sereh Dunent	7 (13)

Non-fiction

1	THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY by David Suzuki	2 (9)
2	MARLEY & ME by John Grogan	3 (17)
3	THE ISLAND OF SEVEN CITIES by Paul Chiasson	7 (3)
4	THE NASTY BITS by Anthony Bourdain	1 (4)
5.	THE WEATHER MAKERS by Tim Flannery	4 (13)
6	STUMBLING ON HAPPINESS by Daniel Gilbert	6 (2)
7	JANE JACOBS by Alice Sparberg Alexiou	(1)
8.	SIX WORDS YOU NEVER KNEW HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH PIGS by Katherine Barber	5 (14)
9	MY LIFE IN FRANCE by Julia Child	10 (3)
10.	FREAKONOMICS by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner	9 (48)



FINALLY A BOOK ABOUT... ARMED BIRDWATCHING

Sgt. Jon Trouern-Trend, a 36-year-old medic, was posted to Iraq in 2004, and immediately began a popular blog about birding there. Now gathered into *Birding Babylon* (Sierra Club Books), Trouern-Trend's postings capture the resilience of nature in the face of human destruction. Even the southern marshes, deliberately destroyed a decade ago by Saddam Hussein, are coming back to life, and bird species once feared extinct have been seen



LUCKY LOUIE stars comedian Louis CK (centre). Unlike shows like *Everybody Loves Raymond*, this family's problems are serious

The working-class sitcom returns

The new show Lucky Louie is a deliberate throwback to the gritty All in the Family

BY JAIME J. WEINMAN • When people talk about sitcoms these days, they're usually talking about glossy-looking, expensive shows about middle class people. *Two and a Half Men*, *The Office*, *Friends* and various *Friends* clones. But *Lucky Louie*, the new sitcom on HBO and the Movie Network (the first episode airs on June 11), is the opposite of glossy: the sets are spare, drab and artificial looking, the cast is mostly middle-aged, the camerawork makes the whole thing look like a televised stage play. It's more like an episode of *All in the Family* than a modern sitcom—and that's just what the people behind the show want.

Created by its star, comedian Louis CK, *Lucky Louie* is a deliberate throwback to an earlier era of sitcoms—particularly the '70s, when producer Norman Lear made a fortune with drab looking sitcoms like *All in the Family*. Louis CK has stressed the *All in the Family* connection, telling *Punchline* magazine that he was inspired by that show. "We're also able to say more explosive things and to present more ugly honesty. And that's something they certainly did."

Greg Fitzsimmons, a writer who has his first sitcom job on the staff of *Lucky Louie* (he previously wrote for *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*), says that before production began "We just sat in the writers' room and watched old episodes of *The Honeymooners* and *All in the Family*." Those shows were about working-class families struggling to get by, a theme that was once a staple of prime time TV. Norman Lear alone added *Sanford and Son* and *Good Times* to that subgenre. But since *Roseanne* a decade ago, there hasn't been a big hit sitcom focusing on people who are trying to make ends meet.

Instead, the most successful domestic sitcom of the last decade or so was *Everybody Loves Raymond* (where *Lucky Louie* executive producer Mike Royce worked as a writer), about a guy with a high-paying job and a family whose problems were relatively easy to solve. *Lucky Louie* is about a family with real financial problems, where both spouses have to work, and where the lead character tells his daughter, "God is dead and we're alone." Fitzsimmons says that the time is ripe for a return to this kind of comedy: "People sort of feel crushed, I think, and they're just trying to get by. This isn't a guy who's more glamorous and sexy than anyone who's watching the show."

Even the way the show is shot is a throwback. *Lucky Louie* is the first network sitcom in years to be shot on videotape, the brightly lit, flat-looking process that is used for talk shows, news shows and sketch comedy. Lear brought this process to American sitcoms with *All in the Family*, and many other shows followed his example, but in the last decade or so most sitcoms have gone for the richer, classier look of film or high-definition video. The creators of *Lucky Louie* didn't want the show to look classy or like a mini-movie, the way most modern sitcoms look, so they went back to tape, which not only looks rawer than film but allows for fewer special visual effects. "You're not going to see a rotating 360-degree camera," Fitzsimmons says. "Louis went back and chose a really old stock of videotape that really does look flat and staged."

The influence of shows like *All in the Family* has been felt on a number of recent shows, as network executives seek to recapture the idea that a sitcom can be a source of controversy. Fox alone has two sitcoms directly inspired by *All in the Family*: *The War at Home* and *American Dad*, whose co-creator recently said: "We look to *All in the Family* as a template for how to do a political show." But those shows are glossily produced or, in the case of *American Dad*, animated. *Lucky Louie* is trying to go for a harsh look to match the harsh subject matter. The look of the show, Fitzsimmons says, informs the audience that "We're not trying to be clever—we're going to let the writing and the acting talk to the quality of the show."

The epitome of the modern-day sitcom's glitzy look may have been *That '70s Show*, which just ended its run, every episode featured elaborate photographic tricks, costumes, and special effects. *Lucky Louie*, on the other hand, looks more like a real '70s show: a Norman Lear comedy with four-letter words added. In his *Punchline* interview, Louis CK dismissed modern sitcoms as "people in a very nicely lit set wearing nice clothes saying very well-tailored comedy to each other." He's hoping audiences are ready for a show that does the exact opposite. M



ELIZABETH TAYLOR'S DEMISE... ACCORDING TO TV

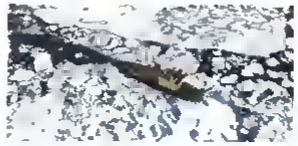
The old broad is alive, to the best of her knowledge, and busy shilling a new jewellery line. Appearing on *Larry King Live*, the gem-obsessed multiple nuptialist proved herself equal to King's questioning. King: "Let's clear up some things. A lot of tabloid stories about you." Taylor: "Oh, my God. Am I dead? Am I alive?" King: "Are you alive?" Taylor: "I think so." King: "What courage." Taylor: "It is something, isn't it?"

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BOB MARTIN AND BETH LEAVEL in the Broadway production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, nominated for 13 Tony Awards

'Nudge, nudge, aren't we clever'

The Drowsy Chaperone is the hottest kind of Broadway show: the self-mocking musical

BY JAIME J. WEINMAN • At this year's Tony Awards (June 11), the most-nominated Broadway play is the Canadian musical *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Described as "A Musical Within a Comedy," it's about a 1920s musical that comes to life in a show tunes fan's living room. If it wins Best Musical, it'll fit right in with other recent winners like *The Producers*, in which most of the songs are parodies of traditional musicals, or last year's winner, *Spamalot*, an outright spoof of musicals. It's a type of show that seems to have taken over Broadway: the musical that makes fun of its own genre. You could call it the "meta musical."

When *The Drowsy Chaperone* premiered at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 1999, it was pretty unusual to do a satirical musical about musicals: this was the time of big, pompous, super-serious musicals by the likes of Andrew Lloyd Webber. But by the time *The Drowsy Chaperone* came to Broadway last year, there had already been a bunch of Tony-winning meta-musicals, as well as *The Producers* and *Spamalot*, there was *Avenue Q*, a *Sesame Street* takeoff where every song is a parody and where a character briefly considers turning the whole story into a musical.

Bruce Kimmel, best known for writing and directing the movie *The First Nudie Musical*, doesn't think much of this new kind of show. "[A] show that constantly winks at you and lets you know it's not serious—well, I just tune out because the joke is over for me very quickly." The new meta-musicals all have that way of letting the audience know the story isn't to be taken seriously, in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, the lead character's comments pay tribute to the things audiences like about old musicals, but also point out the bad things, like racial stereotyping and sloppy plot construction. Kevin McCollum, who co-produced the Broadway production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, says that the lead character is a surrogate for the audience. "He is all of us who are thrilled by the theatre, and who are also sometimes disappointed by the theatre."

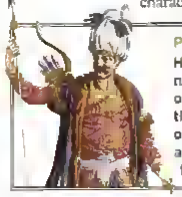
There have been meta-musicals before, but they weren't as relentlessly ironic as today's crop. In 1959, writer-composer-director Rick Besoyan had an off-Broadway hit with *Little Mary Sunshine*, a send-up of operetta that was more affectionate than ironic. And in 1971, producer-director Harold Prince (who receives a lifetime-achievement Tony Award this year) unveiled *Follies*, a now-legendary attempt to use the history of Broadway musicals as a metaphor for all of 20th century American life: a *serious* meta-musical.

But *Follies*, Kimmel notes, was actually using the self-referential devices to get the audience more involved with the story and the characters, not less: "It has a plot all its own, and, like them or not—I like them—real characters feeling real emotions. And it certainly doesn't wink at the audience in any way, shape, or form." And while most of Stephen Sondheim's songs for *Follies* were homages to one classic Broadway songwriter or another, the songs all worked the way good musical theatre songs are supposed to: revealing character, advancing the story, or setting up a great dance number.

By contrast, the songs in *The Producers* or *Spamalot* aren't all that interesting and aren't really intended to be: they aren't supposed to engage the audience the way the songs in *Follies* do, but rather to analyze and mock musical-comedy conventions in the middle of a number. But if you mock that, you're also mocking the idea that the audience should get emotionally involved with the songs or the characters who sing them—and if the audience doesn't respond that way to the songs, what's the point of doing a musical at all?

McCollum argues that a meta-musical can get theatregoers more involved, not less: "When you play with the form," he says, "I think it's very satisfying for the audience, because it's a participatory act by showing up at the theatre. We're saying 'We know why you're here, and now we're going to use our imagination collectively'." Kimmel isn't sure that meta-musicals are capable of depth. "I can't invest in a show when the show, the characters, the authors, and the director are all going 'nudge, nudge, aren't we clever'."

But in a time when many audiences won't accept a straightforward, unironic musical, the distancing effects of a *Drowsy Chaperone* may be the only way to mount a light musical comedy. If anything sums up the philosophy of the meta-musical, maybe it's *The Drowsy Chaperone*'s advertising tag line: "In the real world, the only people who burst into song are the hopelessly deranged." M



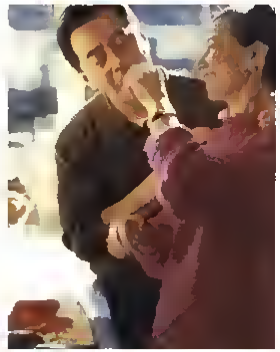
JOAN MARCUS/AP

PERFORMANCE OF THE WEEK **GENGHIS KHAN**

He conquered Asia, united Gobi tribesmen into the Mongolian nation, and now, 850 years after his birth, Genghis Khan has his own rock opera. The show, which opened to universal acclaim in the Mongolian capital of Ulan Bator, combines throat singing, opera voices and rock. The nation has revived interest in Genghis as a symbol of Mongolian nationalism. But despite his reputation for brutality, the opera also portrays him as a family man and pal.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

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- Start by knowing your carbohydrates (carbs) and understanding how much you should eat.
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Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. They're always with you...and they're always the same size! When planning a meal, the Canadian Diabetes Association suggests using these portion sizes as a guide:

- **Grains, starches and fruits:** Choose an amount up to the size of your fist.
- **Meats and alternatives:** Choose an amount the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.
- **Vegetables:** Choose as much as you can hold in both hands. Choose low carbohydrate vegetables (e.g. green or yellow beans, broccoli, lettuce).
- **Fat:** Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.
- **Milk and alternatives:** Drink up to 250 ml (8 oz.) of low-fat milk with a meal.

Adapted from the Canadian Diabetes Association's Just the Basics, Tips for Healthy Eating, Diabetes Prevention and Management Guide, August 2005

Did You Know?

Testing around some meals can help you see the impact of food and portion choices on your overall blood glucose control.

Target blood glucose levels as recommended by the Canadian Diabetes Association*

	BEFORE MEAL	2 HOURS AFTER MEAL
Targets for most people with diabetes	4.0 - 7.0 mmol/L	5.0- 10.0 mmol/L
Normal range (if it can be safely achieved)	4.0 – 6.0 mmol/L	5.0- 8.0 mmol/L

These targets are intended to be guidelines only. You and your healthcare team should set targets that are specific to you.

- Testing just before a meal can help you decide what to eat and how much.
- Testing 2 hours after a meal can help you understand if your meal choice helped keep your blood glucose within your target range.

*Canadian Diabetes Association 2003 Clinical Practice Guidelines

Monitoring the effects of your menu choices will put you in charge of what you eat

- How are your results before meals? Are they above or below your target range?
- How much do they rise after a meal?
- Look for patterns. For example, are your results always high after supper but in range after other meals?

Before making any changes in your regimen talk to your physician or diabetes educator.

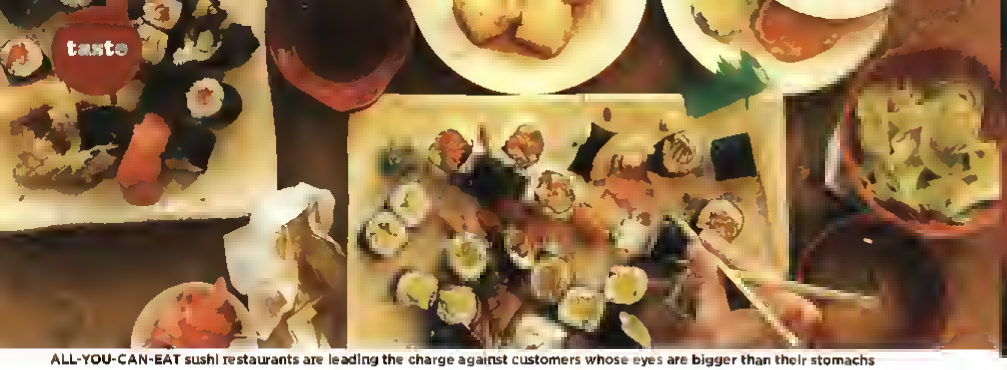


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ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT sushi restaurants are leading the charge against customers whose eyes are bigger than their stomachs

Are those leftovers on your plate?

If so, it may cost you—some restaurants are dinging customers for their wasteful habits

BY NANCY MACDONALD • Tired of food being wasted, Dragon House, a $5.95-a-plate Chinese buffet in suburban Iowa, laid down the law recently, telling a Des Moines family of regulars they were no longer welcome. According to Chen Huang of Dragon House, the family of four was industriously wasteful. "They came to the Dragon House every Saturday, and wasted food every time," says Huang, noting that this is the restaurant's first blacklisting in its 10 years in business. Taking single bites from plates overflowing with egg rolls and crab rangoon, the family would leave the rest to be tossed, often wandering back up to the buffet for more.

Will other all-you-can-eat restaurants—by definition, "take as you please"—look to curb our enthusiasm and limit our waste? Will buffets start charging extra for uneaten food? It turns out some establishments already do—especially the all-you-can-eat sushi restaurants. In the face of rising costs, they say they're just looking out for their bottom line. And it's a trend that Vancouver's reigning king of sushi, *chef célèbre* Hidekazu Tojo, says he understands all too well.

Not that he'd do it, of course. Tojo, the creator of the California roll, is credited with introducing sushi to the West Coast mainstream in the early seventies. The owner of Tojo's restaurant (included in the book *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*) regularly hosts politicos and rock stars (like the Strokes, on a recent weekend). Tojo thinks Vancouverites eat more sushi than people anywhere else in the world—including Japan. (Indeed, there are three times as many sushi joints as McDonald's outlets in greater Vancouver.) But as restaurants tried to attract more patrons with all you can marketing, which first appeared in the early 1990s, the economics changed for restaurateurs. "People are paying less but eating more," Tojo says. "They've got to make up the difference somehow."

And so outlay must be checked. The trend to control food waste is especially noticeable in the greater Vancouver area. Sui Sha Ya, the mid-market Lower Mainland all-you-can-eat sushi chain, charges for leftovers—when patrons leave more than five pieces uneaten. At Robson Sushi Japanese Restaurant, which after 9 p.m. charges $9.99 for its all you can eat menu, manager Sunni Chen explains that he proactively discourages waste by curbing customers' orders. "Seventy-five per cent are regulars, so we take control. We know how much they take, and we don't allow huge orders," Chen says. When customers do overdo it, he charges for leftovers but, unlike some sushi sellers, Chen lets you take your scraps home.

Typical of many sushi outlets, the Shabusen Yakiniku House, a downtown sushi/Korean barbecue buffet, has a eat-the-whole-piece policy: if you order the all-you-can-eat sushi, you must eat the rice the fish sits on, too. "Otherwise," explains manager Allen Wong, "we see people ordering 10 pieces, eating the fish off the top, and leaving the rice behind." Wong rarely charges extra for the Korean barbecue—but he carefully controls it, offering patrons more meat only after they've finished their previous round.

No one in Vancouver says they can remember who first instituted the leftover policy, though most have been employing it for the past two to three years. And it's not limited to the coast. "First time, we don't charge," says Allen Chen, manager of Toronto's Sushi Star Japanese Restaurant, one of several Toronto-area enforcers. But if customers keep wasting, "if they're being unreasonable," Chen says, he will ding them according to the industry norm—between $1 and $2 per piece.

Winnipeg's Affinity Vegetarian Garden has tried a different tack. Featuring soy versions of ham, pork, fish and goose, the downtown restaurant caters to Winnipeg's white collar lunch crowd with a pay-by-weight buffet. Meanwhile, it's not just buffets and all you-can eat outlets getting in on the act. At Montreal's east-end Spirite Lounge, punishment for wasting food ranges from fines to excommunication. Nightly, the pious establishment offers a single vegetarian/organic meal choice, which patrons order in one of three sizes. If you can't clear your plate, you're fined ($2) and denied dessert. But dessert lovers beware: if you choose but can't finish dessert, you'll be banned, Des Moines style. So eat hearty—but don't leave a trace. M



TODAY'S SPECIAL...WINGS OF ZADAR

This cocktail, served on the beach at Zadar, Croatia, can only be mixed in free fall from 10,000 feet. Its creator, Ante Butic, based it on maraschino liqueur. After jumping from a plane, Butic pours the drink, which falls upward into a mixer. Then he performs several somersaults to blend it. The cold air at high altitude chills the drink, which, he says, must be served to beach-goers immediately upon landing.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF HARRIS/MACLEAN'S



'WHAT HAPPENED to the guy I fell in love with?' the authors ask. 'Is he in there somewhere, hidden behind the beer-stained sweatsuit?'

Fix your underperforming husband

How to do it: draw up a 'scorecard' and read him the riot act. Then, 'no going back.'

BY JULIA MCKINNELL • "We were so anxious to get rid of our spouses that we even helped them pack. Which is no great surprise," write the authors of a new book called *The Scorecard. How to Fix Your Man in One Year or Less*. "It was second nature for us to clean up their messes; at this point we couldn't even depend on them to know how to get dumped without our help."

Julie Bell and Donna Brown share uncannily similar stories of marital wreck and ruin. Both are high-powered United Airlines employees. Both are their families' main breadwinners. Both were fed up with their husbands. Bell's was a "househusband" who drank too much. Brown's husband was surly and uncommunicative and directionless in his career. Independently (neither woman was aware of the other at the time), Brown and Bell booted their mates out, believing that their marriages were over.

The authors don't talk about how they finally met, but once they did, and compared notes, they saw so many parallels it occurred to them that other wives must be just as frustrated and miserable. Each wanted specific changes to her husband's behaviour. They write, "Do you ever ask yourself, 'What happened to the guy I fell in love with? Is he in there somewhere, hidden behind the beer-stained sweatsuit and three-day stubble?' " Both were ultimately flabbergasted that within a year of reading the riot act, their husbands had effected a total metamorphosis.

The ultimate product of the "scorecard" is a major overhaul on everyone's part. Bell and Brown concede. "We weren't exactly the most delightful people to live with, either. The nagging and screaming had become a vicious cycle: we were stuck in the role of Nagging Mom and our husbands had been cast as the Bitter, Sullen Teenagers."

For wives who want to try this at home, the authors suggest first making an inventory of problem areas with your husband. The book's example scorecard includes such items as: don't take your anger out on me; do your own laundry; share the yardwork; teach each kid a sport; help plan birthday parties; don't turn every back rub into sex; stop paying ATM fees. Under a category called "Evolve," they asked their husbands to "find a therapist" and "be honest with yourself."

"You must step back from your relationship and, to the best of your ability, look at it as you would a business problem," they advise. "We did it first by identifying the areas that needed improvement and defining our expectations, and then by giving our partners specific tasks and determining the necessary measurements to hold them accountable for improvement. It may sound cold and rigorous and corporate, but it was all we had to fall back on."

Write down your issues and prioritize, they suggest. If you've been nagging him to shop for groceries, maybe this is an issue you can back off on—for instance, if you can find an online service that offers home delivery. The scorecard isn't so much a report card as it is a "gap analysis," they explain, which in business is a map that "enables a company to compare its actual performance against its potential performance, and then determine the areas which must be improved." The book shows you how to chart your map and carry out the analysis. "The biggest obstacle to change was actually to tell ourselves 'I deserve better,' " they write. "It took more courage than we thought to say with confidence that we needed something."

The authors also offer tips on how to communicate with an underperforming husband. "Much research suggests that women have roundabout ways of telling their partners what they need." For instance, Bell says she used to make generalized requests of her husband such as "Please take out the trash." What Bell meant was, "Please take out the trash in the next 15 minutes." What her husband heard was, "Please take out the trash sometime this weekend."

Separation from your husband isn't necessary, they claim, although it may be the only way to force change. The main point is, "once you've determined that making a change is really important, you must take a course of action and stick to it. No going back, no compromise, no 'wait and see.' "

The book cautions, however, that wives "Take Stock of Your Own Expectations: if you married a working-class guy who's perfectly happy living paycheque-to-paycheque, and you want the BMW and the month-rental in Tuscany, well, you've got the problem." M



MOST IMPROVED JON VOIGHT

The Oscar winner apparently wants to end his very public feud with daughter Angelina Jolie. In the past, Voight accused her of having emotional problems and condemned her choice of previous husband Billy Bob Thornton. Last week he sent his best wishes to Angelina via the media after she gave birth. In an interview given in a van parked on a New York City street, Voight said he hopes to see the new baby. So far, no word from Angelina.

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MACLEAN'S

ROGERS

Words of wisdom: Let him be



SCOTT FESCHUK

Good news, everyone. Canadians will soon get a chance to see *The Spirit of John Lennon*, on which "famed psychics" use their "exceptional talents" to communicate with the late Beatle in a way that's "totally convincing." (Aww, to hell with it—it's too much effort to keep using quotes to denote sarcasm, hence forth, please just assume a derisive tone.)

The program, which airs June 13 on Bravo!, begins with some fine print. We are advised that the show is "for entertainment purposes only"—just like calling the psychic hotline or reading about Britney Spears' parenting. Our narrator has an elegant accent to lend class to the proceedings. Our narrator's script has lots of questions instead of direct claims ("Now that John Lennon is in the spirit world, can he be contacted there?") to lend weaseling to any lawsuit defence.

Early on, we are introduced to psychic Joe Power. Joe goes to Liverpool. He touches a Penny Lane street sign. He "finds" John's old school. He raises his hands theatrically and claims to have made contact... *with the spirit of John Lennon!* Apparently, John is shouting out names. Eddie Cochran, Ray Someone, a guy named Allan—the first manager of the Beatles. "Pretty fascinating to be able to come through with this information," Joe says to himself, about himself. Yes, *fascinating*. Finding old places and citing old names—that is undeniable evidence that you have access to the spirit world, or possibly to Google.

With that, we're off to India to track down a "mysterious guru" who claims to "hear John Lennon's music from the spirit world" (or possibly through the walls from the neighbouring ashram's hi-fi—either way, he's probably getting pretty sick of *Imagine*). For our camera crew, this is to be an arduous journey, as they will have to endure the hardship of travelling into the Himalayas while simultaneously keeping a straight face.

We find the guru meditating. "Could he be contacting the spirit of John Lennon?" the narrator asks. (Probably not, but the cameras are rolling, so what the heck.) The guru plays the sitar. He writes down some words. The narrator asks more questions. "Did the spirit reader write lyrics from the other side? New music from the spirit world?" (Again, probably no. I mean, come on!) The "lyrics" are ultimately translated into English. Alas, given their rhyming scheme and simplicity we can only assume the guru inadvertently contacted the spirit of Dr. Seuss.

Then to New York, where Joe Power has found his way to a café for a candlelit seance with an old friend of John's named Vinny and a stunned chap identified as "an ardent Beatles fan." Joe warns he may "go into a semi-trance." His eyelashes flutter. He looks like a four-year-old trying to convince us he's asleep.

Joe says John wants to know how things are with Vinny's ear problem. Vinny, an elderly man, says his ears are about the only parts of him that are fine. Joe winces as one does when one realizes one's credibility is royally boned.

After the seance, more intrigue: an audio guy totally legitimately finds an unexplained sound on the tape that wasn't faked at all, honestly. We hear a voice that sounds like we think a voice might sound if it were coming from the afterlife say the words "peace." The message is peace." The crew is shocked. "Amazing! Mind-blowing! Seriously!" says one technician, overselling it a bit but you've got to like his enthusiasm.

Finally it's off to L.A., where we meet Patricia Barkins, a "conscious trance channel." *Uhh... and that means...?* "I do lift out of my body, but I stay within my aura." I know what you're thinking: cool, a vacant body! Finally a place to store my albums and cholesterol. Regrettably, Patricia has an exclusive occupancy deal with Saint Germain. "He's an avatar, he's an ascended master. I go out of my body, he comes into my body." (The relationship works for the avatar, too. Why buy when you can time share?)

Saint Germain hooks us up with Lennon. Someone asks "John, what is the hereafter?" The reply: "It is whatever you want to make it." (Nifty. When I get there, I'm making it a Dairy Queen! And I'm sticking my whole arm into the chocolate dip and neither my Grampa nor DeForest Kelley is going to stop me, dammit.)

The session ends and then... whoa! Not *another* unexplainable phenomenon! But there it is on the screen: a shaft of light in the form of a face! Hey, wait a minute—*John Lennon had a face!* And thus one kinda looks like his!

At the show's conclusion, yet more fine print. Apparently, the special was "produced, augmented and edited to increase the entertainment value of the program." You mean it was all faked? Amazing! Mind-blowing! Seriously! M

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RECOMMENDED

Bionic dolphins, Deadwood, and overpasses for wildlife in our compendium of things that make life worth living

I'LL HAVE MY LAMP 'TO GO,' PLEASE

Made from heat-resistant paper, each of these take-out-themed lamps features a glowing Chinese character. (Yes, the chopsticks are included.) *wrapables.com*

TUNE IN, TURN ON AND SOAP UP



Ramp up your shower singing with the *American Idol* microphone-shaped radio. It lets you sing and bathe—to your favourite tunes (Caustic Brit judge not included.) *bedbathandbeyond.com*

30-YEAR-OLD ROOKIE

If you love underdog sports movies, check out the trailer for *Invincible*, based on the true story of schoolteacher Vince Papale, who joined the Philadelphia Eagles football team in 1976. The film is due in August. *movies.clevver.com/video/18651/invincible-trailer-300.php*

THE PICASSO OF PACMAN PAINTERS

Jeremiah Palecek, an artist in the Czech Republic, posts and sells his paintings on his blog each day, the most alluring of which are based on stills from old video games. His portraits give blocky classics like Duck Hunt and Joust a warm feel. *jeremiahpalecek.blogspot.com*



FRENCH POP —'EN ANGLAIS'

To call Phoenix's music "soft rock" seems a bit insulting. On *It's Never Been Like That*, this French band injects a healthy dose of pop and indie spirit into their tunes, making it worthy of any hipster party.



WILDEST WEST

HBO serves up one badass West with *Deadwood*, its award-winning series. This frontier is a hooker-slapping, "war of all against all" place. Snap up the second season on DVD in time to catch the third (and final), beginning June 11 on TMN.



INDIE SCHOOL

The scruffy, wimpy indie rock boys of Broken Social Scene have made a hilarious gym-class inspired video for the song *Fire Eyed Boy*. Watch for high socks, short shorts, headbands, and Geddy Lee judging their skills. *brokentelephone.ca/videos/advance/bss-fireeyedboy.mov*



TAXMAN BLUES

Princess Margaret's son is selling her treasures to pay estate taxes. If a $1.6-million Fabergé clock is too rich, there's the necklace ($620,000) Margaret wore to her wedding—given to the royals by the first CPR president's wife. Cheapos can pick up a gilt orchid pendant for $60. June 13-14, advance online bidding at *christies.com*.

LOST LITERARY SELECTIONS

Since any book read by *Lost* characters could hold the key to the series' plot, fans have lots of summer reading. Start with *Bad Twin*, written by Gary Troup, an Oceanic 815 passenger whose rearranged name spells "purgatory." More traditional tomes include *Watership Down*, plus Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, which played a pivotal role in the season finale.

WHY DID THE ELK CROSS THE ROAD?

Problem: North American highways criss-cross parks, disturbing animals' migration routes. Solution: conservationists are teaming up to create safe overpasses, from Yellowstone to the Yukon. *y2y.net*



BIONIC DOLPHIN FLYING MACHINE

Reaching speeds of 55 km/h, this single-person vessel (so far, demonstration only) can dive underwater and jump above the wake, just like the mammal it mimics. *innespace.com*

FROM RUSSIA WITH BLACK HUMOUR

Given the bizarre realities of Vladimir Putin's Russia, post-Soviet life is a hard thing to satirize. But St. Petersburg-born New York novelist Gary Shteyngart pulls it off nicely in *Absurdistan*. All 325 lb. Misha Vainberg wants is to get out of Russia and back to America. But his mafia father killed an Oklahoma businessman and the U.S. won't give Misha a visa. Salvation—he thinks—lies in the oil-rich ex-Soviet republic of Absurdsvani.



SWEAT IN STYLE

Teaming up with Puma, W Hotels is making working out—while you travel—a little sweeter. At their five Manhattan hotels, guests get the use of pre-loaded iPods and Puma bikes. TrainAway, Puma's travel-friendly collection (shoes include slots for room keys), will be available at W boutiques.

THE END

MARILOU TABUNO

1963-2006

She was a nanny who sent most of her pay home to her own kids. She'd been in Canada only six weeks.

Marilou Tabuno, née Tabuac, was born on Dec 21, 1963, in a rural section of Urdaneta, a small city located in flat farmlands north of Manila. Petite and fair skinned, she was the fourth of five children born to José Sr and Isidra Tabuac. At 23, Marilou married a 19 year old from a neighbouring barrio, Dionisio Tabuno, and laboured alongside him for years at a gas station, he as a mechanic, while Marilou, who held an accounting degree, kept the books. Meanwhile, she bore two daughters and two sons. Though the work was heavy in combination with caring for her children, it spared Marilou for a time the fate of her eldest sister Lisa, who left the Philippines at 18 to work abroad, first in Kuwait, then in Hong Kong, sending chunks of salary home. For now, Marilou could remain with her children. But it would not last.



When bad health forced Dionisio, an epileptic with high blood pressure, to abandon paid work, Marilou, as the family's sole bread winner, had little choice but to leave her children—the youngest a toddler, the eldest in grade school—for Hong Kong, where wages are triple those at home. She soon settled with a Cantonese-speaking family, raising a pair of twin girls. "I treat them like my own and I think of them as my own," she later wrote in a letter. She kept just a fraction of her earnings, remitting the rest to her own children. Yet the Hong Kong dollar, she knew, would never secure their futures. Canada, with its promise of citizenship and, far into the distance, the hope of reuniting with her children in a new and prosperous home, beckoned. After more than a decade with the same family, she chose for the second time to abandon a life she knew for one she did not.

In December, Marilou wrote Jonathan and Merick Kopman, both 33-year-old professionals—he an investment adviser, she an interior designer—about a job caring for their two-year-old daughter. The Kopmans, who live in an affluent section of midtown Toronto, had been impressed by Marilou's resume, provided by an agency. But it was the letter, which spoke of her abiding affection for her twin charges, that persuaded the Kopmans to sponsor her move to Canada. When she asked if she might take a week to visit her own family, Jonathan, who knew she would likely not see her children again for many years, suggested she stay a month.

She arrived in Toronto on April 11, 2006, and admitted to the Kopmans that she was penniless, having left her savings with her children. The following evening, Jonathan—knowing Marilou, a Jehovah's Witness, would want to celebrate what her faith calls the Lord's Evening Meal that night—found a nearby Kingdom Hall, dropping her off and collecting her after the service. Marilou later said she cried during the ceremony, so surprised was she at his kindness.

Though she worked all day, she had evenings free and would leave her small basement room for walks up Bathurst Street, a major thoroughfare, often stopping at the bank before remitting money, on pay days, at a nearby Filipino grocery. Of her biweekly salary—$500 after room and board and tax—she at times kept only $50. On May 15, she sent $227.05—10,000 Philippine pesos—stipulating in a note that it go toward her daughter's university fees. "Regards, Mama," she concluded. The ramshackle grocery, stacked to the ceilings with dried noodles, cans of coconut milk and delicacies exotic to Bathurst but, to a Filipino palate, the quintessence of home, became Marilou's nightly destination. There the Filipino nannies of the neighbourhood gathered for daily dinners and camaraderie, the discussion careening from support-group style laments to the bravura of a labour union meeting. They spoke of demanding employers and spoiled charges or told new nannies of their rights. Always hovering above their talk was the prospect of living in Canada on their own terms.

Still, Marilou had few complaints. A jolly, friendly woman, she enjoyed her work at the Kopmans and otherwise dreamed of nothing but putting her children through school. One day, she hoped, she would send for them. Frank talk at dinner was respite from the strangeness of Canada and from loneliness. She was likely headed for such a dinner on May 23 when, as she crossed at a Bathurst intersection, she was struck by a Chevrolet Venture. It had been six weeks since her arrival. Television news reports later dwelt on shots of a single canvas shoe beneath the van. Seeking her identity, police found nothing in her pockets but a bank card, records showed she had just visited her branch, only steps away. Marilou died the next evening at 43. Her oldest daughter has since abandoned university for lack of money. BY NICHOLAS KÖHLER

ILLUSTRATION BY NORA KRUG





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